

Irish Writing

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and
TERENCE SMITH

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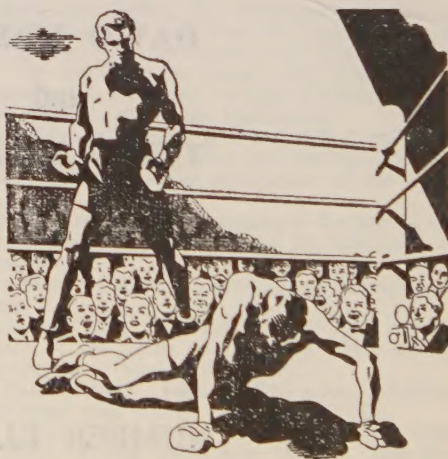
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IRISH WRITING

Edited by

DAVID MARCUS and TERENCE SMITH

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NORAH HOULT

IRISH WEDDING

EVEN though the wedding wasn't to take place till eleven at the Church, Joe Maginnis was up fine and early in the morning. For he was to be best man, and he knew right well that all the responsibilities would be on his shoulders. The bridegroom, Johnny Mullen, who had been lodging with himself and his wife for several months past, was after all only twenty three years of age, and while he seemed an efficient enough young man behind the bar of "The Three Feathers" where he worked, there was something almost childish about him away from work. You might think indeed if you had been born and reared in Belfast, as Joe had been born and reared in Belfast, that he was over young and had too few savings behind him to think of marriage yet awhile. But he put the critical thought behind him; especially he put it behind him on this lovely June morning with the London sun even managing to get its rays through to the basement kitchen where he was busy cleaning the shoes. Indeed he had to throw down the dirty cloth, and go out of the door and up the area steps to make sure it was as good a morning as it seemed.

Pushing the rusty iron gate wide open, he went right out on the pavement, and looked up past the chimneys of the grey Victorian houses, lapsing sadly into neglected old age, at the sky. It was blue and cloudless, and in that silent time before the boys and girls, and older people, too, hurried out of doors to go to their day's work, there was nothing to interfere with the benediction it gave. Oh, God in His mercy and in His grace had sent them a fair day for the wedding, and Joe made a prayer in his heart that the married life of Johnny Mullen and Angela Riley would be as fair and as happy and as blameless as this new summer day that God had made for His creatures. And then an old woman crawled up from the basement on the opposite side of the street, and a little ashamed of himself for wasting time he hurried back to the shoe cleaning.

There were a lot of shoes to be cleaned. He was doing his father-in-law's shoes, and Joe put an extra bit of polish on them just for the reason that his feelings towards old Johnny Larkin were mixed up, because the old man could be an awful trial and no mistake. The bridegroom's, of course, had to be cleaned and shined to the heights, and he handled them with a sort of reverence, for since marriage was a Sacrament, these were the shoes of a man about to partake of one of the holy mysteries. Then there were the shoes of the bridegroom's two brothers who had come over from Dublin the preceding day. He wondered whether the brown suede shoes belonged to Patsy or Martin, but in any case they were a bit of a facer, and he was looking at them with some

disapproval when he heard steps on the stairs.

His wife, Mary, came into the room, and when he looked at her dark hair that she had had specially permed for the wedding, and her fine pink cheeks, and the smile parting her mouth, and the whole sweet familiar shape of her, he felt his heart go soft within him, though for that very reason he spoke on the gruff side.

"I thought I'd get these done first so they'd be ready."

Mary, looking at his square bony face and the eyes, dark and absorbed behind the glasses, knew there was nothing in the gruffness. She nodded and said, "Oh, Joe d'ye know: it's going to be a lovely day! I looked out of the window and there's not a speck in the sky."

"See this pair of fancy shoes? I'd say it belonged to young Martin. Would you get me that wire brush you have, so that I can have a go at them?"

"Wherever did I put it? Oh, I think I know!"

"And bring me down yours, while you're up there. I forgot them."

"I'm wearing my new black ones. They'll want the special cream I got."

"Well, bring it, bring it," said Joe sharply, looking at the clock. And seeing that he was beginning to get into the worried state she was afraid would happen to him, she went upstairs quietly.

When she came back she said, "I heard the old man stirring. He's getting up."

Joe nearly threw down the brush she had handed to him. He took a hard grip on it, and said, "Well, the hell of it! Couldn't he keep quiet this morning of all mornings, and rest in bed a bit out of the way?"

"Ah, you needn't think to keep him out of the way today," said Mary with a shrug. She knew her father and his ways, and she could mostly put up with them, but it was, she appreciated, more difficult for Joe. Here was the one trouble in all the sixteen years of their married life. She went swiftly over to the sink to fill the kettle.

Johnny Larkin came into the room with only his socks on his feet. He was a thick-set, red-faced, grizzled man who had been round the world soldiering, and he still moved with a sort of jauntiness. Now he said, peering beneath his thick, grey eyebrows, "So you took me boots on me, Joe?"

"I took them last night to have them ready cleaned for you. Here they are ready done for you."

Johnny took the boots and examined them carefully. "I could ha' done them myself, same as I always do."

"I thought to keep your hands from the dirt. One of us may as well do the lot. What's the hurry your getting up so early?"

"It's going on for eight, and you been up this good while. I heard you go down the stairs."

You would! There's nothing you don't hear, thought Joe in his heart. But he compressed his lips, and started to do Mary's shoes. His father-in-law picked up the suede pair, and said, "These

are yon Martin's. Girl's shoes! What would a young fellow be doing wearing the like?"

Joe heard himself snapping back, "He can please himself, can't he," and winced with contrition as soon as the words were out.

"Aye, he can please himself. Everyone can please themselves. There be new ways and there be old ways, and we can choose. And that's maybe the worse for us in the long run," said the old man. Then he started to grunt as he bent to pull on the boot.

"Your shoes are done, Mary," Joe called, and Mary came in from the scullery.

"I'm going to take the lads up a cup of tea," she said back to him. "That'll wake them up in a good mood."

"I'll take the tray up," said Joe quickly. "You can be getting a bite to eat for the three of us, and then we can be out of the way dressing upstairs while they're down here."

When he came back down the stairs again, he had a puzzled sort of look on his face which made Mary ask, "Well, are they awake now?"

"I wouldn't say that," said Joe slowly.

When she stared at him, he added, "Oh, I woke them up all right: though they were sound off. Johnny, too! He asked me the time, and I told him it was rising eight. But Patsy muttered something about it being the crack of dawn, and turned over again. However before I came down, I said to Johnny, 'don't forget, man, it happens to be your wedding day.'"

"Ah, it'll be all right," said Mary comfortingly. "Patsy and Martin were drinking their share last night, but Johnny can never take much, ye know that. So he'll be up soon."

"I hope you're right," said the old man who had been listening carefully. "But that Johnny Mullen was never an early riser since he come to live in this house. I'm not surprised to see he's the kind that'll likely be late for his own wedding."

"Bring your chair up to the table, father," said Mary. "I'm giving you a rasher of bacon that the lads brought over with them, real Irish bacon that you'll enjoy."

The old man brought his chair up to the table, but went on talking, "Still there's one event that none of us will be late for. And that's our own funeral. Be he Irishman or Englishman, Catholic or Protestant. For that's in God's belonging, and not ours."

And he looked at them both hard for he wanted to put the feeling in them that a funeral was more important than a wedding itself, and that he was head of the queue in that household for the last rites.

But Mary just answered him with, "Who wants to be thinking of funerals today? I'm ashamed of you." And then she turned to Joe with, "Isn't there a different smell off the bacon?" and Joe nodded and smiled back, though he was really thinking that surely it was a right queer thing for a young man to lie drowsing in bed when the sun had gone up on his own marriage day. And looking at Mary as she passed him his cup of tea, he thought that it hadn't

been that way with him; he had hardly slept a wink the night before with the solemnity and the excitement of it all flooding him. Ah, well, young Johnny was still a child, and he had, by his own account, an easy sort of life. Being a barman was a soft sort of a job in itself.

All the same when the three of them had had their breakfast, and he and Mary were finishing the washing-up, he began to get worried about them again. He looked in at the clock, and it had gone on a good piece, for it said quarter to nine. (And the old man looked at it too, and nodded his head!) He went back to the scullery, and said in a low voice, "What are they up to at all?"

Mary said, "Wait a moment, and I'll go up to them myself, and tell them to get a move on." She wiped her hands on the roller towel and he heard her running up the stairs, singing out, *California, here I come!*

But she was away a bit too long for his fancy, and he went to stand at the foot of the stairs and heard loud laughter, and Mary's voice giving crack for crack. She's encouraging them too much, he thought, and then was ashamed of the criticism, and went back to the kitchen to shake out the table cloth, and put it on afresh.

Mary ran down with, "They'll be down in a minute. I told them they'd better shave after, all except Johnny. He was just washing. Would you take him up this hot water, Joe?"

Joe just put the jug inside the bathroom where Johnny was soaping himself, and went down quickly. The next hot water must be for him, for it was easy seeing he would have to do all that was to be done. There was the taxi to be ordered, and there were the favours to be fetched from the flower shop, where they said they would be ready first thing in the morning.

He reminded the other two of these things. Mary said, "Now don't start worrying, Joe," but the old man said, "I'll go along with you. Just wait now, and I'll put the clean shirt on my back, and I want some hot water. Is that Johnny out of our bathroom?"

"Go and see, and tell them their breakfast is ready and getting cold," said Mary.

Patsy and Martin came tumbling into the room before Joe had finished shaving; Patsy specially looked very tousled and bleary-eyed, he thought. He was glad to get upstairs, and change into his best blue suit, and the glass showed him that he didn't look bad at all. However there was the old man to wait for, and though he wanted to leave him behind, the old man wouldn't be left behind.

"You'll find the flowers paid for," said Patsy, as they went out of the door.

They went to the florist's first to pick up the favours, pink rosebuds for the ladies, and white carnations for the gentlemen, but found they were not ready, so they went on to the garage, and instructed the man there to be at the house not a minute later than a quarter to eleven. "It's for a wedding, d'ye see," said Joe, and the man said, "Trust me, Sir," and Joe felt pleased at being called

Sir, for it showed that the chap knew he was dealing with a responsible person. And the favours were ready when they got back to the shop.

So he was in good enough mood when he got home at a few minutes before ten. There was only young Martin sitting in the kitchen, for Patsy and Johnny were both upstairs, and Mary would also be getting herself ready. But there was something a little irritating in the way Martin was sitting sprawled in the chair, and reading last night's sporting page of the evening paper, as if he had all eternity in front of him. And when Joe showed him the flowers he blinked at them as if he hardly knew what they were.

"You haven't shaved yet?" said Joe to him after a few moments.

"I'm waiting on Patsy."

"Did you get your shoes?"

"I did not."

"Here they are. Hadn't you better be putting them on?"

Martin took the shoes without a 'thank you,' looking at them with his mouth a little open, so that Joe had to turn away, because he wanted to say something sharp. He went upstairs, and there at least he had a welcome, for Mary turned round from the long mirror in their bedroom, and said, "Oh, I'm glad you're back, Joe!" and then as shy and sweet as a young girl, "Tell me, do I look all right?"

She looked, in the black georgette dress with a wide flared skirt that the lady for whom she worked in the mornings had given her, more than all right. He stared at her long and seriously, and then something sprang up from his heart to his throat, thinking of his own wedding day, and what a good wife she had been through the years, even if God had not sent them a child. He said, "You look great!"

But that was not enough, as she smiled back. He had to put his arms around her gently so as not to untidy her hair, and say, "Honest, Mary you don't look any different from what you did the time we stood up in the Church together."

"Oh, Joe!"

"It's true, Mary."

But the moment could not be prolonged. They heard Patsy come singing out of the bathroom, and Mary disengaging herself said, "You don't look bad yourself. Just give your hair one more brush. And then, Joe, will you bring up my shoes?"

Patsy was in the kitchen before him, and he heard loud voices as he entered. Somehow he was not surprised when he saw Martin passing back to his brother a half pint bottle of Jameson. The old man was shaking his head, "I never touch it," he was saying. "It's no good your persuading me, for you could try till the cows come home."

Patsy turned on him, "Good man, Joe! Have a swig. You deserve it."

Joe could take a drink with the best, but there was a time and a place for everything. He shook his head.

IRISH WRITING

"Go easy, now. Johnny, I hope you haven't had anything. It wouldn't be well, and you in front of the priest in much less than an hour."

"I hardly wet my throat," Johnny assured him. He frowned. "What time is it?"

"Can't you see the clock? The taxi'll be along in less than half an hour. Put on your flower. No, not that way. Take the silver paper off."

He had to show the three of them every mortal thing, before he took Mary up her shoes. When he came back, he found Martin still there, and Patsy arguing with the old man about his not having a drink, and when he tried to interrupt Mary came in, and, of course, Patsy had to make a play of it, standing up, and bowing and saying, "My goodness! Here comes the bride, isn't she smashing! Lady, can I kiss your lily white hand?" and Mary answering him back. And then the whiskey was out again, and Mary taking just a sip and looking at him apologetically for doing it.

Oh, it was all right enough and natural enough on a happy day. But weren't there two kinds of happiness? There was the rowdy kind you might sometimes have in a pub with a singsong, and the dear knows you deserved it, because you'd done your day's work, or your week's work; and there was the high solemn kind that went with being in love truly and for ever, and which sometimes happened when you knelt before the Blessed Sacrament. And surely the beginning of a wedding day should be coloured by the last kind.

However he waited a few moments to make sure that his voice was easy before he said to Martin, "If you're not careful we'll be leaving you behind. Away with you now, and get yourself spruced," and he was pleased when Johnny joined in with, "Get out of this now! I'm not having a tramp at my wedding," and took him by the shoulders, and marched him out.

All the same the taxi was there before they were ready, because when he had asked Johnny to hand him over the wedding ring, Johnny said that Patsy had it. And Patsy beat his brow, and said, "Where the hell now did I put it where it would be safe like?" and went rushing up the stairs. And Martin delayed himself helping to search for it, and then Patsy found it in his trousers pocket, and started to make a whole long yarn of why he had forgotten that he'd put it there.

Joe got so impatient with the knowledge of the cab waiting there outside, that he broke in on the story. "Never mind that now. We've got it, and that's enough. Are we all ready now?"

Patsy suddenly turned on him, flaring up with, "Don't be such an old woman! You've been like a cat on hot bricks the whole bloody morning, spoiling everything for everybody. There's plenty of time. It doesn't take three minutes to get to the church. Johnny was after telling me, and what is it but ten to eleven? Stop beefing for the love of God."

"The responsibility's on me, and I'm not going to have the priest kept waiting for you or for anybody."

And he heard his voice tremble as he said the words, and then he heard the old man say, "Joe's right. We should have been at the Church before now, so as they can see we're there. The bridegroom should always be there before the bride for one thing."

But from the corner of his eye he saw Mary was saying something to Patsy in a low voice. Oh he knew well that she was saying it was his way to be serious like, and that Patsy musn't take offence, but he didn't like a wife of his apologising for him that way, and then suddenly they were all laughing because Martin was saying in a sob kind of voice, "I'm tired asking if anyone has a pin for this flower now that I've taken all the silver off it, the way Joe says is proper. Sure, what good's a flower without a pin!"

"Here you are," said Mary, and now Joe was able to lead them all out and up the area steps. Coming into the light of the outside world made them conscious of their clothes and the wedding favours, and they looked about them sheepishly, both wanting to be observed and not wanting it, at one and the same time.

As soon as they got out of the cab, the photographer on the steps of the Church hurried towards them. "I just taken the bride and the bridesmaid," he told them. "Now if you gentlemen will stand here . . ."

But Joe waved him back, "Afterwards, afterwards," he told him. "We're on the late side," and though Patsy was already slicking his hair back ready to take up position, he followed Joe into the Church without opposing him. And as soon as Joe was inside he knew how right he had been, for there was the priest already looking out of the sacristy.

To Mary sitting in the front pew, relaxing after the strain of the morning, the way Joe acted, pulling them all together, answering the priest's nod, and producing the ring just at the right moment, was wonderful. There he stood just behind Johnny, his head bowed, and his fair hair sticking up just a bit in front, because he could never get it to lie down, and yet for all that looking so grave and so good that there wasn't anybody in the world who could surely help respecting him. It was a pity about the word with Patsy, but then Patsy was nothing but a lad, and Joe wouldn't hold it against him.

Since Johnny hadn't risen to a Nuptial Mass, preferring to spend his money on the breakfast which he had paid for in advance, the ceremony was soon over. Indeed it seemed to Mary that the four principals were longer signing their names and all that in front of the Registrar in the sacristy than it had taken to get them married. She sat listening to Angela's aunt, a thick-set, fair-skinned woman with a mite too much rouge on, Mary thought, wearing a bright, blue costume and a hat with a blue feather in it. Miss Riley told her that Angela's best friend, Rose Donovan, had had them all worried to flitters by never turning up. She must be sick, but then why couldn't she have let them know, and perhaps there was jealousy in it, because Angela had asked Sheila Keating to be the other bridesmaid, and Sheila had never got on with Rose,

nor Rose with her. For some reason! All the same it wasn't nice of Rose to let them all down like that. And if she turned up now, there'd be no room for her, because the priest was being asked to the wedding, as was only fit and proper. The priest's name was Father Maclaren, and he wasn't Irish but Scotch, but all the same he was very nice.

Mary worried a little because did Joe know the priest was coming? However she forgot this when they all got out of the Church, for the photographer wasn't going to let them slip this time. He took them in a group first, then he took Angela and Johnny on their own, and Angela looked very sweet in her grey dress with the little black hat. And then he wanted Angela and Johnny and the best man and bridesmaid, and there was a little confusion because he thought Patsy was the best man, not Joe, and everyone except Mary laughed a lot at the mistake. Of course there was a lot of codding between them and the photographer whose accent showed him to be a Londoner, so he had to be impressed that they were the Wild Irish sort of thing. At last, however, Johnny and Angela and Miss Riley and Sheila were got into the waiting cab, though Sheila kept asking Mary if she wouldn't go, and that she'd just as soon walk.

But Mary said, "No," and set off with Joe and her father, following Patsy and Martin. Joe didn't say much; indeed he was still recollecting the beautiful words that had been said in front of the altar, and he squeezed Mary's arm tightly as they walked, while the old man grumbled about the way Miss Riley had talked so loudly in the Church that it was distracting to the few worshippers saying their prayers.

But if Joe imagined that all was now well over, and he could stay in the clouds, he had a surprise waiting for him. They had no sooner got to the door of the café, where the breakfast was to be held, when he saw that Johnny seemed to be having some sort of altercation with the driver. But Patsy and Martin were up with him before, and so he just went past the whole lot of them on up the stairs to the reserved room, thinking that it must be a case of over-charging, but it was a poor thing for a man to wrangle on his wedding day!

But no sooner had Mary and he gone over to Angela, and Mary asking him if he had kissed the bride, when he felt someone at his elbow. It was Patsy, and he muttered, "Joe can I speak to you?"

"What is it?"

Patsy drew him away, and Joe saw that Father Maclaren had just arrived. The next moment Patsy was saying, "Do you know what that taxi-man robber is after asking? Two pounds, five shillings!"

"That's a lot," said Joe, staggered in spite of himself.

"He says he's been kept waiting round for more than an hour. But he wasn't driving."

"That's no matter. They charge just the same. There's no-

thing for it, but you'll have to pay him. Johnny'll have to pay him."

"But sure, Joe, he hasn't got it. And Martin and me, we haven't got it to lend him. We're cleared out except for the price of our fare home tomorrow."

"He has not! Paying for the do here, sunk him, except for the pound he's keeping back to take Angela to the pictures this afternoon. He can't give that up, he says. Oh, he has five shillings, and he offered the man that for himself."

"Won't that do? And tell the man to charge it, see?"

"Well, will you come and tell him, Joe. He might listen to you. He won't listen to us."

Mary came up and asked what were they plotting, and so she had to be told. And, of course, the old man heard it all, while Patsy rushed down the stairs again to see if Joe's suggestion would work. He was back in no time with a shake of the head.

"He won't do it, Joe! He threatens to make ructions if he's not paid."

And then Johnny was there, saying, impatiently to them both, "Have you got the money, for God's sake?"

All Joe had on him was a few shillings. There was nothing for it but a whip round, done as quietly as possible so that Father Maclaren shouldn't twig what was going on. Mary had seven and six, and the old man rather unexpectedly came out with five shillings, and then Miss Riley produced a whole pound. She had to be got away from talking to the priest, and Joe did it by bringing Martin up and saying, "Excuse me, Father, but I want to introduce you to a young lad who's on his first trip to England. Oh, Miss Riley could you give me a moment over a matter that has arisen with regard to the photographs . . ."

So they just had enough with an odd shilling or two from Patsy, and Joe went down with him to pay the man off. He had to tell him:

"You know you're charging too much. I wasn't born yesterday, and it's a try on."

"I'm not charging you a penny too much. You kept me from twenty to eleven and now it's after twelve. I could have taken a party to Brighton that I gave up on your account."

"I'm awfully sorry, so I am, Joe," said Patsy when they turned to go back to the party. "But how was I to know Johnny had left himself so short?"

"It's not your fault," said Joe, and indeed Patsy couldn't reasonably be blamed. Johnny, waiting for the two of them with glasses filled, said, in a low voice, "Did you ever hear the like? Them men are scandalous robbers so they are!"

"Ah, leave it," said Joe with a wave of the hand. It was just something that shouldn't have happened in the way a dirty rag shouldn't have been left on a clean, white sheet. He did his best to forget the whole thing, and now the waitress was bringing

in the soup, and the people had to be shown where to sit at the table.

Johnny and Angela sat together at the head, with himself on the other side of Johnny, and the priest on Angela's left as his opposite number. He took Miss Riley as his neighbour for by now the Father would have had enough of her talk, and so he placed the bridesmaid, Miss Keating, on the priest's other side. Then next to Miss Riley was the old man, and Mary went of her own accord to sit by her father. That left Patsy and Martin together, but anyhow Patsy was acting as wine waiter, so he had to have the end place. And Patsy was really very good for when the old man refused even to take a glass of the Sauterne, he went and got orangeade for him. It was all decent and decorous enough, and the only thing that slightly troubled Joe was the arrival of the photographer with the pictures which cost five shillings each, for neither he nor Mary could buy one, and it was as well, he noticed out of the corner of his eye, that Miss Riley was finding some more money in her bag, or else the man would have had all his trouble for nothing.

Anyhow the glossy prints passed from one to another gave them something to exclaim about, the quickness with which they had been developed! All of them except Joe and Father Maclaren who wasn't, of course, in any of them, looked first wonderingly and critically at their own likeness. There was, Joe noticed, a kind of surprised innocence on their faces as they stared, and once again Joe felt his heart filling with tenderness. He was back in his old mood, the sacramental morning mood, and he saw all the people about them—except the priest and his presence was a sanctifying one—as his own people, true Irish people, whether they came from the North or South, people who had kept the Faith, whatever else they mightn't have done. And it seemed to him that the Irish boys and girls, exiles in London, made a stream of living water in a harsh sterile place. And then he thought of his speech, which he must make soon, for he had to go back to work that afternoon.

So that when they were eating their ice cream and fruit, and the voices had grown noticeably louder, he went over to Father Maclaren to explain. He didn't want to be pushing himself, but would he mind if he, Joe, spoke first, owing to his having to get back to the job? And the smiling ruddy face of the young, sandy-haired priest looked up at him, and nodded, and said, of course he didn't mind: in fact he'd rather be let off making a speech at all.

They wouldn't like it if the priest didn't say just a few words, Joe said back to him, and then he returned to his own seat, catching Mary's eye, and looking at the clock as he did so. And Mary tumbled to it, and leaned across to Patsy to tell him that Joe was now going to propose a toast to the bride and bridegroom, and Patsy went round the table filling all the glasses again. And then he knocked on the table and there was a silence, and Joe stood up, seeing all the faces turned expectantly towards him.

But Mary looked down again immediately, for when she saw him standing there so sturdily with his eyes shining and intense

behind his glasses, her heart was too charged with tenderness to look any longer. For she was his and he was hers, so that in a way it was herself standing up there before them all, with even the waitress listening by the door. She heard his start:

"Reverend Father, ladies and gentlemen; in these pagan and difficult times, it is a beautiful and refreshing thing for us to be gathered here to-day to celebrate the Holy Sacrament of Marriage between a young Irishman and a young Irish girl coming together in the stainless purity of their love to make the solemn vows which we have all heard them make: for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, till death do them part. For we know they mean those vows in the way that no film actor or actress in Hollywood can mean them to judge by what we read in the papers of the show they make of themselves"

Mary missed the next few words, for she saw Patsy opposite them give a grin, and then look down at the table as he felt her eye upon him. Then she heard Joe saying:

"May the young bride be a worthy daughter of Saint Brigid; may the bridegroom be a true son of St. Columba. For let none of us forget that the names of the Irish saints are like a bright galaxy of stars in the sky, St. Kevin, St. Patrick, St. Cuthbert, St. Aidan, the Blessed Oliver Plunkett, all these and many more are drawing down upon us the graces of Heaven, and have secured for us till time ends the name of the Island of Saints and Scholars for our beloved country. None of us need be ashamed of being Irish"

"Hear, hear," said the old man by her side suddenly, and so loudly, that she couldn't help being a little embarrassed by the way they all turned to look at him, in the same way as she'd get embarrassed when he made loud, fervent ejaculations in the chapel. But Miss Riley was nodding at him approvingly, and the blue feather in her hat bobbed up and down, and then she started to clap, and everyone joined in.

When Mary could listen again, she heard Joe saying: "And if a dark shadow now lies athwart our fair land, I mean, of course, the dark shadow of Partition which severs brother from brother, let us hope that this Iniquity, this INIQUITY, I say, for it deserves a strong word"

And just as Mary was thinking that, of course, it wouldn't be Joe not to bring in politics to it, and giving a half smile in her heart, what should Martin do but upset his glass which fell against his plate making a tinkling crash. And though she knew the thing to do was not to take any notice so that Joe wouldn't be put off the flow of his language, yet, of course, attention was distracted, the more that Patsy gave Martin a hit with his elbow to signify his disapproval, and then started grinning all around him like a baboon. And Joe had been put off probably, for she heard him winding up with, "I will say no more about that, but proceed to my pleasing task of proposing a toast to the bride and bridegroom, and may long life and great happiness be theirs."

And then they were all on their feet, glasses in their hands,

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looking at Johnny and Angela who sat with downcast faces. As she drank, she saw Patsy pouring some liquor out of his own glass into Martin's empty one, and, of course, he couldn't do it neatly but he had to spill a lot of it!

After that Joe hurried off, squeezing her arm as he passed, and the old man nodded at him, and said, "That was a grand speech, Joe," and she was glad to hear him saying it. She watched Joe slip something into the waitress's hand as she stood at the door, and thought with pride, "he's done the right thing again, and I expect no one else would have remembered, and he must have kept something back for that special purpose." And now that he'd really gone, everything became a little flatter for Mary, like a day with the colour and the warmth drained from the sky so that she saw things clearly enough, but with no distinctness or excitement, and she found she wanted to yawn. The wine must be making her feel sleepy.

All the same she tried to listen to Father Maclaren when he stood up and everyone clapped, and heard his opening words: "As our friend just said, it is indeed a pleasant thing and a good thing in these difficult times to be present at a true celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage, a very solemn Sacrament, as no one here needs reminding of" but Joe's words sounded better, she thought, her attention wandering, and then the priest was making them all laugh by saying that he hoped that in due course he might be asked to conduct another ceremony in which a third and very small party would be the principal person. Still his speech was nothing like as good as Joe's had been in her esteem though later she had to agree that he had almost as fine a singing voice. For he gave them *Ye Banks and Braes* in fine style.

The singing was started off by the old man, for Mary knew that this was what he was looking forward to, and she gave the tip to Miss Riley to ask him. Johnny Larkin gave a big cough, and then he was on his feet bawling out in fine style about the supper Gilhooley gave to his friends:

"He had everything that grew above, and underneath the ground,
He had a dozen waiters to hand the grub around,
You never saw such etiquette as was displayed that night,
I'll swear it would have knocked a Lord Mayor's dinner out of sight!

We had ham and lamb and beer by the bucket, and a porter sham
And you never saw such a devil of a jam
As the boys when they all sat down!
With their forks and their knives they worked away like working
for their lives
And the boys and the girls and the fellows and their wives
They nearly ate up half the town."

It was Johnny Larkin's moment. He heard the sweet beat of applause, and he saw that the faces turned towards him reflected

admiration, respect and approval. Oh, there was no one could deny that he had it in him still, and he didn't really mind, though he thought it was going a bit too far, when Miss Riley flung her arms round him, and gave his cheek a smacking kiss, while everyone shouted things he didn't bother to listen to. He saw the priest looking across at him with interest, and he wasn't surprised when after Martin had sung *How Can You Buy Killarney* and there was a pause while the last of the whiskey bottles was being opened, he saw Father Maclaren making his way over to him, and he got nimbly out of his seat to receive him:

"That was a fine performance you gave us, Mr. Larkin."

"Oh, I don't know." He shrugged the compliment away with proper humility, but added so that nothing should be missed. "I still have my memory, thank God, and have never forgot the words of any song I've ever sung, and some of them far longer than that one. Like *Jubilation Day*."

"What age are you?"

"I'm eighty two this October."

"You're a grand old man. I see you don't take anything. Are you a teetotaler?"

"I never touch a drop, Father. And I'll tell you why. It wouldn't stop at one. If I took one I'd have to take another. And another. And on! D'ye see the way it is with me? And it wouldn't be only for one evening. I'd go out and do the same the next evening. So now I leave it alone."

Father Maclaren's friendly, blunt-featured, boyish face took on a grave expression, and he nodded. "You're doing the right thing then, I'm sure."

"Yes, I started to do well seven years ago, just before I came to live with my daughter," the old man hurried on. It wasn't often he had a chance to talk to a priest in a friendly way face to face and he wanted to use the opportunity to spill something of the heavy and mystifying burden of himself. "But all the same, d'ye know this, Father? I never feel satisfied with myself."

"Do ye not? I'm sure you shouldn't worry."

"But I do, Father! Do you know what I'm always thinking about? The Day of Judgement!"

And he looked hopefully into the young priest's kind eyes. These men in black clothes who had given up wife and children, surely they knew more than the rest of what was to come, surely they could give him the magic word dispelling all fears. Father Maclaren said, "You're a fine old man, and doing your duty as I'm sure you do you have no need to worry yourself."

Kind words and probably, nay surely, true words, yet the old man remained dissatisfied. He was avid for more. But he saw the priest look away, and there was that Patsy one standing at his elbow, and saying "I've filled your glass for you, Father."

"Ah, no thank you. I don't think I will."

"Father, you must have one for the road. This is good Irish Jameson, Father, and you won't get the like over in this country."

"If you put it that way then, it's an excuse," said Father

Maclaren smiling, and then Patsy was putting up his hand, and saying, "Quiet all, Mary here is going to give us a song."

There was no one, barring himself that is to say, that the old man preferred to listen to more than his own daughter, and he sat down while the priest went back to his seat, and he nodded his head with approval when her voice at last came out in its fulness—for she was shy at first—with:

"Because I love you so, Macree,
There's no one else but you!
Like sunset on the Wicklow hills,
You set my heart aglow . . ."

But as soon as Mary had sat down, saying in confusion, "I was no good at all," and he had reassured her with "You were in grand voice, girl," he felt that now that they had done their share of the entertainment everything was really over. For he saw that it was unlikely he'd be asked to sing again since, after Father Maclaren had sung, they started chorus singing, and drunken enough they sounded as led by Patsy and Martin they wailed, *Maybe at the closing of your day . . .* He tugged at Mary's arm and whispered, "Hadn't we better be making a move?" and she nodded at him with, "Soon! Just in a moment now."

The old man folded his arms over his broad chest and sunk his head. Outside the room the sun was high in the sky, the clank of milk bottles belonging to the United Dairy Company rattled by in little red vans, women set out with determination to do their afternoon's shopping, men employed by the London Gas Company went to and fro, and laundry men delivered clean linen, waiting to be paid with pencils behind their ears. But inside the room, though the waitress had already started to clear the table, as a hint that time was up, there was a drunken twilight, of roses fading in Picardy, of nostalgia for the dreamland that lies away at the back of the head:

And if there's going to be a life hereafter
And somehow I am sure there's going to be
I'll ask my God to let me make my heaven . . .

The waitress went over to Miss Riley, and said something to her, and Mary caught the gist of it. "We'll go now, father," she said getting up. "I'll just have to say good bye to one or two."

He didn't bother with any farewells himself, but started towards the door from where he stood watching Mary as she made the rounds. He heard Patsy try to detain her with, "But we're going to the pub: why can't you come?" At last she joined him, and they went out together into the world that was indifferent and detached from everything that appertained to weddings. But the old man was as sober as any judge, and he could hardly wait to speak:

"So yon Patsy is going on to a public house. And holy murder, how can he afford to do that when he claimed that he

couldn't give anything towards the taxi price?"

"Oh, I don't know, father. I expect they're going to 'The Feathers,' and Mr. MacCartney, he's the landlord, you know, will sure to want to stand them all a round before closing time. They're not likely to stop long. Well, it all went off very well, didn't it, and it was a pity Joe had to go so early."

"I don't know that he missed much," said Johnny. He had many things to criticise, and he brought out the first one. "Miss Riley took too much," he said nodding. "Did you see her face red as a turkey cock underneath the blue feather she had, and acting up as if she was a spring chicken?"

"Ah now, she came to enjoy herself didn't she. And you know well she's a right kind woman. And wasn't Father Maclaren very nice, joining in with everything?"

"He was all right," he said carefully. And then resentment because the priest had given him no final comfort boiled up again, and he added, "I don't like to see a priest drinking the way yon wee man was drinking. You'd never see that at home in Ireland now."

"Maybe not in Belfast, father. But they always go to the wedding breakfasts in Dublin. Miss Riley was telling me as much."

He grunted disbelievingly. To him home was Belfast, and Belfast was round the Catholic Falls Road, and the rest of Ireland was but an attachment to the Falls Road. Mary went on:

"And he was greatly taken with you. Coming right over to you like that, and complimenting you the way I heard him. I thought it very nice."

He wasn't particularly mollified by that because wasn't it after all his due, and he the oldest man there, and singing the longest song? But he reverted to something that even Mary couldn't deny was a right scandal.

"I can't get over that half-boiled eejut, young Johnny. It's the queerest way to start your married life that I ever did hear. Not having even the money for your cab fare to the Church!"

Mary shut her lips tightly, and looked away. She was tired talking to him, and he in this contrary mood when nothing would be satisfying him. Of course, in a way, he was right about the taxi episode for she could see that it had upset Joe.

In any case after they had got home, and she had made them both a cup of tea, there was enough to do without having to listen to him. She and Joe were giving up their room and their own bed to the newly weds. And Patsy and Martin were, of course, staying in Johnny's old room for the night. She and Joe were shaking down in the kitchen; the extra single bed had to be moved out and downstairs, and she had to borrow the camp bed that Mrs. White who had the top flat had promised to let them have. All the carrying and all the shifting round took a deal of work, and was very hard on her sheets and pillows cases. She was still at it when Joe came back from work, and started in immediately to give her a hand.

When she had cooked a tea supper for the three of them it

was well past eight o'clock. And by the time they had washed up, and everything was to rights, though the bed looked queer and out of place in the kitchen, it was nine o'clock, and, of course, Joe had to listen to the news.

When the wireless was turned off, the old man gave a long look at the clock, and then started off again as if he'd been wound up:

"I'd like my understanding enlightened," he said, "as to how three young men, and a young woman that's just been married to one of them in holy matrimony can stop out till this time of night. In the circumstances! Because them circumstances are queer ones."

Mary took a look at Joe, and saw how his face, tired now, hardened as he looked at her father.

"What do you mean the circumstances are queer? There's nothing queer about the circumstances as far as I know. If there had been I wouldn't have been at the wedding."

"Och, you made a right good speech, Joe, and I'm not denying it. St. Brigid and St. Columba! And may they preserve us all! But marriages musn't be what they used to be, for in my time a man that made up his mind to wed would customarily have the price of a wee house to take the girl to. If they hadn't, well, they'd be certain to have a few pounds put by for what is called the honeymoon when they'd do their best to take the girl away to a decent place. And if they can't afford that, well let them admit they're tramps, and come on their two feet to the chapel, and not be dealing in taxis that they can't afford to pay for."

"You know very well, father," said Mary quickly, "that Johnny Mullen is no tramp, but earns five pounds a week at the 'Feathers,' besides getting a trifle beyond most times."

"Then more shame to him," said the old man. "That's all I say. More shame to him!"

Mary took another alarmed look at Joe, but he sat with his eyes closed so she said, "Don't keep on, father. They're young, aren't they?"

"I'm not keeping on," said Larkin glancing again at the clock. "I'm just wondering seeing as how they can stay out this late. I hope no harm has happened them, and they with liquor taken, and strangers forby."

"Angela and Johnny were going to the pictures, and then on to supper with Miss Riley," said Mary.

"I wasn't talking about them," said the old man. "I was saying . . ."

Joe suddenly got up, and said to Mary. "What about coming over to 'The Feathers'? You look tired, and a glass of stout will do you good." He moved towards the door.

Mary got up slowly, "Well, all right then," she said, for, of course, she could see that the old man must be getting Joe down. At the door, however, she turned and said, "We won't be long, father." For once again he had that forlorn look on his face that

clutched at her heart however trying he might be, and the dear knew he was trying!

Joe had to get a pound out of the box in which they put the money they were saving for their holiday, because, of course, all their change had gone for the taxi. But the taxi was the one thing neither of them mentioned as they sat close together at the back of the bar. Mary told Joe everything that had happened at the wedding after he had gone, and specially she told him about how Father Maclaren had quoted him as soon as he got up to speak, "‘As our friend has just said,’ that’s the way he started off. About it being a fine thing in these difficult times to be at a real wedding. You know, what you said, only you put it better."

"And what else did he say?" asked Joe, and she told him as well as she could remember. And then she told about which songs they had sung, and Joe listened quietly, nodding his head. He was very tired, she could see that, and though she only had one stout because her head was heavy she made him have two pints of bitter.

As they were coming down the area steps, they heard voices, and as soon as they were in the kitchen they saw that Angela and Johnny were back. Joe looked at the two young faces with fatherly anxiety, for now the ale had warmed up his perceptions again. Everyone went into drama some times in their lives, slipping out from the shadows on to a lighted stage, and since for these two this was such a day, he looked, as it were, to see golden crowns on their heads. But Johnny, whom he had seen so many nights drawing beer behind the bar, didn't look so different from the ordinary run of himself, except for his best suit, and the wilted white flower, especially when he gave a big yawn, and couldn't he cover his mouth with his hand? And Joe looked hastily away at Angela, but she was over with Mary talking to her in a low voice as if she were asking for something, so he looked as quickly back, and asked Johnny the usual things about how they had enjoyed themselves, and what the picture was about.

Mary came over to them, and said, "Angela's going to bed: she won't take anything. What about you, Johnny?"

"Ah, no thanks! Miss Riley gave us so much that I'm full up to the back teeth," said Johnny.

Angela moved over to the door, and then stopped to say, "Good night all."

"Good night to you," said the old man, and "Good night, Angela," said Joe getting up, and putting all the warmth he could in his voice, and trying not to think that there was something pertly self-conscious in the way she was standing, patting her hair, and not looking at them but past them as if she were bored or something. Not thus would Deirdre have gone to meet Naisi, but, of course, it was all different now, and the girl was tired out, and Joe rubbed his hand through his fair hair, not knowing how perplexed he was looking to Mary's eye. Then he offered Johnny a cigarette, and "Thanks," said Johnny. "I smoked all mine."

There was a pause while they lit up, and then Johnny went

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over to the wireless. "Anything on?" he said, twiddling knobs, and they all waited till they heard the strains of a hot dance band.

"Did you see your brothers the night?" old Larkin shot out suddenly at him.

Johnny turned, and slowly shook his head. "Not a sign of them. We thought they'd turn up at Miss Riley's but they never showed themselves."

"When did you see them last?" asked Joe.

"They came along with me and Angela to Piccadilly Circus, and then they said they might have a look around, and maybe a cup of tea at the Corner House." He stopped and listened to the singer on the radio, starting to hum, *I want some red ro-ses for a blue la-dy.* They when the music stopped he said, "Surely they ought to be in by now! For they haven't the money to make a night of it."

"That's what I thought," said the old man with a nod.

Johnny looked at him with a slight frown. He turned to Joe, "I'm sorry about the mix-up with the taxi, Joe, but I'll pay you back Saturday."

"It's Miss Riley you owe the most," said Joe. "She gave a pound.

Johnny's brow cleared. "Ah, she won't give a damn," he said. "She's a great old girl. You should have seen the spread she had for us."

"She's a big-hearted woman," said Mary seriously. "But she has plenty to do, you know Johnny, with her money."

Johnny didn't reply. He was listening again to the wireless. Then he started to walk about the room, picking up the evening paper, but scarcely looking at it before he threw it down again. Behind his back the old man winked at Joe, who pretended not to notice, taking up the paper himself. Then he heard Johnny say, "Well, I think I'll be getting off. I'm kind of sleepy. Good night now."

"Have you everything you want?" Joe asked him.

"Ah, yes, thanks. Thanks all."

And not looking at them, but with his head down, he went through the door. They listened to his steps going up the stairs, and then the old man clicked his tongue in a disapproving fashion, because, Mary thought, poor Johnny hadn't carried things off very well; but after all he was young, and you had to forgive a bit of uncouthness. To stop him saying anything derogatory, she yawned, and said, "I hope the lads won't be long, so that Joe and me can get off."

The old man shook his head. "You can't expect consideration from them sort," he started, and would have gone on, but Joe said, "Why don't you go up yourself? If we have to sit up, there's no call for you to be waiting on them?"

"I'll be going in a minute or two," said the old man. He got up, and turned off the wireless, and then came back to his seat.

It would be more than a minute or two, thought Joe, looking down at the paper again. For, of course, he was hoping he'd be

granted the spectacle of Patsy and Martin coming in full of drink. Or perhaps he expected a policeman's knock with some alarming or disgraceful news. Oh, the old man would see the day through to the end; it wasn't in him to use a bit of tact and get out of the way.

But it was only a moment or two, before Mary who had been moving round, getting things as far forward as she could, stopped, and said "Here they are," and true enough, there were steps descending and he cocked an ear: were they walking steady?

The two lads who pushed open the kitchen door seemed to be aware that they were coming under the eyes of a tribunal, for though their faces were flushed, and their eyes bright, and a thought unseeing, they held themselves very upright, and Patsy bowed, and said, "Good night all," as if he were making a formal call.

"We were just wondering what had happened you," cried Mary.

"I'm sorry if we kept you up," said Patsy, and he stared over at the old man, and added, "Good evening, Sir!" Martin sat down rather abruptly on the chair inside the door, and kept his eyes fixed on Patsy.

"Not a bit. Will you have a cup of tea?"

"Ah, no. We wouldn't put you to that bother. Where's Johnny?"

"He's gone upstairs. He was here till a few moments ago."

"Upstairs," repeated Patsy rather thickly. "I wanted to speak to him."

"Ah, you can't do that, Patsy," said Mary smiling. She looked hard at Patsy trying to remind him that now the marriage bed was in it, and Patsy did remember something, for he said, "Is Angela with him?"

"Who else would he be with?" asked Mary, chuckling outright. "Do you not remember you were at a wedding this day? Where have you two been since, I'd like to know?"

"We been most over the whole world," said Patsy. "It's a mighty big place, London, d'ye know? It's a wonder we found our way back. We been ages trying to find this address, and some people never heard of it."

"I'd best get you a cup of tea," said Mary turning to go to the scullery, but Joe interrupted her by standing up, and saying, "Patsy said he didn't want anything, and I think the best we can all do is to get to our beds, because these boys have to be off early in the morning. What time is it you have to be at Euston, Patsy?"

Patsy frowned, squeezing his eyes shut. Then he opened them and said, "Eight o'clock, that's the devil of it."

"What do you mean the devil of it?" asked Joe, and his voice was a little stern, as if he knew what was coming.

"Well, the whole thing is the difficulty, I mean . . . have you a cigarette, Joe? Thank you! Wait, I got a match. Well, as Johnny isn't here, I have to ask you, d'ye mind Joe? Can you

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lend us the money? I was going to ask Angela's aunt, but we couldn't find our way to her house, and the thing is can we borrow a few quid?"

In the silence that followed Mary turned from seeing Joe's lips shut together to the look on her father's face. He was giving slow nods to himself as he looked at Joe.

"I thought you had the price of your fare on you," said Joe turning to look from Patsy who was swaying a bit on his feet to the seated Martin, who said back with sudden eagerness, "We had. Sure, we had, Joe! It was there all right this morning." And he nodded with satisfaction that he could say as much.

"Well, then where is it gone?"

And it was a stupid question to ask for a blind man could see where it had gone. "You drank it, of course?"

Patsy nodded in confirmation. "The drinks here cost a lot, and they give you nothing for the money," he said. "Of course chaps seeing we came from a wedding got the idea we were standing, d'ye see?"

Oh, yes, he could see all right. "How much is it?"

"A matter of seven or eight pounds, Joe, will see us over. We need a bite on the way, d'ye see? Say, eight quid."

"And you made bloody sure I got eight quid?"

Patsy said nothing, but Martin leaning forward explained, "Your holiday money, Joe! That you and Mary were telling us last night you'd saved to go home next month."

"So you remembered that, whatever else you didn't remember! And you got nothing at all?"

"Cleaned out," said Patsy. "But don't worry, Joe. You'll have it back by registered post in a couple of days. The mother has it."

There was a moment's silence. Mary hardly dared look at Joe. It seemed a long time before she heard him say, "All right then. I'll have to give it you. I'll give it you in the morning when I call you. But I got to say this. It shouldn't have happened. You were awful careless to let it happen."

Patsy nodded his head. "The Irish do be an awful impossible people. But you don't have a wedding every day, you know."

"Good night to you both now," said Joe. "Mary here is very tired and we're sleeping in this room."

Patsy turned, a bit put out. "Come on, Martin," he said to his brother. "We're inconveniencing the people of the house. Is it the same room we slept in last night, Mary, for we wouldn't want to be disturbing any wedded bliss?"

"I'll come up with you," said Mary. "It'll be safer so."

When they had gone, Joe was careful not to look at the old man. He stood up, and moved the camp bed over from the wall.

"Can I give you a hand, Joe?"

"I can do it best myself."

"Well, that was a fine thing, a fine thing!"

Mary came back into the room, a half smile on her face. "They had a lot taken, God help them."

"A lot taken!" The old man stood up. "I wonder the half-baked eejuts dare show their faces," he said, going slowly towards the door. He turned, and looked at Joe directly. "St. Brigid and St. Columba, Joe, but, holy murder, you lost a lot of money on that wedding."

"Good night to you," said Joe, staring back.

"Good night to both of you."

They didn't say much when the old man had gone. It was not till they had said their prayers, put out the light, and Joe was moving uneasily on his hard couch that Mary ventured to say, "I am sure you'll get the money back, Joe. Patsy is all right at heart, ye know."

Joe didn't speak for a moment. Then he said:

"I don't so much mind if he sends it back or not, Mary. It isn't that I'm a mean man. Least I hope I'm not."

"Oh, indeed you're not, Joe."

"But it oughtn't to have happened. Not on a wedding day! And us, you specially, Mary, trying so hard to do the best you could for them. And all the work you put in."

"I didn't do any more than anyone would have."

"I know. But we tried to act decent, and . . . I mean if it hadn't been an *Irish* wedding, a *proper* wedding, I wouldn't mind, but . . . it shouldn't have happened, Mary."

"I know, Joe. But don't take it to heart. They're young."

"And your father'll never let us hear the end of it."

"You wouldn't mind him!"

"No, but there's some truth in what he says. Did you hear him gibing at me about my speech?"

"He didn't mean it that way."

"It doesn't matter. Good night, Mary. Sleep well."

"And you sleep well, Joe."

But he wasn't sleeping well, she thought drowsily as she heard him tossing before she sank off into unconsciousness. And poor Joe, he wanted everybody to be saints, and specially the Irish people. And people couldn't be saints. Only a very few of them. But Joe was made that aspiring way. He couldn't help it. And she wouldn't have him changed for anything in the whole wide world!

MICHAEL LUCEY

THE BOY AND THE SENSIBLE CLOWN

THE boy lay on the grass examining the sun through three-quarter closed eyes. Rainbow-coloured flashes danced quite near.

He raised a hand and hid the sun. He shut his eyes tight and was in darkness.

A minute and he would be in fitful sleep. In time he opened large eyes, rose awkwardly and stared all round. No other human occupied the wide cow-dotted field, nor as far as eyes could discern, the expanse of hill and valley and sea. And the only sounds were those of nature.

Sighing, the boy walked to the high hedge and climbed over on to a very steep road. After standing undecided for a minute he lay back against the hedge—then stiffened, and raised a hand as if commanding silence of the birds and insects. To his ears had come other music: the murmur of a distant brass band.

He waited, fidgeting.

The music remained low for so long he seemed to fear the band must have taken another road instead of coming down by him. But then his attention was distracted. Guarding his eyes from the sun, he looked down the hill. Coming up was a tall figure, clad in rainbow-coloured tatters and surrounded by some dozen smaller figures, dual or treble-hued satellites. Livelier than the rainbow-figure, they seemed to pester it for something.

As this procession neared him one of the small figures recognised the boy. She left the others and approached him, blushing.

"I wasn't with them," she explained. "I just happened to be coming up to meet you as they were."

The boy was giving his attention to the procession, which had stopped a few yards beyond. Its leader stared down at the pair.

"Well," the girl remarked, "you seem very interested in it."

"What? Oh, I was only looking."

"Aren't children easily pleased?" she mused, studying the circling, chattering figures. One demanded:

"Act, clown!"

The clown retreated against the hedge. Despite his dress and lavish make-up he was well-built and looked homely.

"Children!" he complained. "Why, by all that's holy, are they always after me? Even clowns are supposed to get time off."

"Come on, clown. Act!"

"Oh, all right then. But remember, I'm a square peg. I don't like being a clown."

"Are you running away, clown?"

He somersaulted to the other side of the road and back, and

up and down the hill, tatters dancing in gay abandon. Finally he stood on his head in the middle of the road, arms stiffly outstretched, legs clawing the air with comical effect.

The boy said, "It proves him perfectly fit."

And the girl, "It makes me feel young again."

The children laughed and clapped. And voiced:

"You're a good clown, queer egg."

"Sing!"

The clown jumped to his feet and retreated against the hedge. They pressed in on him, crying, "Sing! Sing!" till one cried, "Look!"

Everyone looked up the hill. Round the bend, dazzling and almost deafening them, came a brass band. It was followed by ponies galore, two elephants, a caged lion, jugglers, strong men, acrobats and clowns.

The children ran to meet the procession and danced down with it.

"Well, well," shouted the clown, "I wasn't popular long!"

The boy smiled. "Aren't you glad to be rid of them?" he asked, looking over the girl's head.

The clown came and lay against the hedge nearest the girl. He said, "You're laughing at me, boy. But, though children annoy me, I always want them after they go away. Childish, isn't it? I suppose we can't have things both ways."

The boy considered this while watching the flight of a bee. Then, looking over the girl's head again, he asked, "Are you married?"

The girl declared, "Two elephants and a lion. Nothing to what circuses were."

"You'll go just the same." The boy was piqued. She exclaimed, "I don't know what's coming over you!"

He looked from her to the clown.

"Oh," she cried, "if *you're* too mighty to go to a circus, I'm not!" And marched down after the clowns.

"Women get annoying," said the boy.

"She's only a child. How old are you?"

The boy eyed him suspiciously, then replied, "Seventeen. We're supposed to get married when I'm twenty-one. I'm a lawyer's clerk."

"You're lucky."

"Why does everyone envy me! Oh, . . ."

They were silent, each glumly staring at the opposite hedge. The band was still drowning nature's song.

Suddenly the boy announced, "I want to join the circus."

"No, no. It's no home."

"Listen. I'm tired of this place and of any one place. I want to spend a day everywhere."

The clown looked paternal. He stepped forward, stamping the dust of the hedge from his tattered green shoes, and said, "I've got to go back to the circus. And I've a very important call

to make on the way. The result may be that I can leave the circus. Come with me, if you're coming."

They walked up the hill in silence; the boy not wishing to be dissuaded in his purpose, the clown knowing it was hopeless to try. And he had that very important call to think about.

Distance silenced the band. As they approached an ivy-covered house, the boy again asked, "Are you married?"

The other stopped and examined him shrewdly. He accused, "You're not interested in marriage, are you? You want to spend a night in each place, one night with each bad woman—or innocent girl you're corrupting."

This unexpected outburst left the boy staring back in surprise.

"Well," the clown muttered, "you're not denying it anyway."

"Hallo, there!"

Standing on the threshold of the house was a smiling woman. It was a wise, kindly smile. She had overheard the clown's outburst.

He brightened, and went up the garden path to meet her. The boy stood watching curiously.

The clown stood before her with, "I've been thinking of you a lot. You're—looking younger."

"No." She could smile kindly while reproving nonsense. "I won't see thirty again—no more than you'll see forty. Dear man, you can't flatter me."

"I'm not trying to. You do look younger."

"You imagine too much."

"Do I?"

"Why do you ask?"

He hesitated, then looked over her shoulder into the house. Shyly, "I want to ask you something else."

"No, I'm sorry. Even if I were free to-night, you finish too late, don't you?"

"Tonight can wait. Can't we be together in this house always?"

The woman blushed. She whispered, "Sorry. But we can always be good friends."

"You mean," he muttered, "you can't marry a clown out of a circus." And he hurried back down the garden path.

To the boy he confided, "I'll meet as sensible a woman in some other place."

They proceeded, each preoccupied. To their left a field shone gold and white and green; below, to the right, the sea moved dazzlingly. At the top of the hill they wiped their foreheads.

Their way was a rough semi-circle, and presently the band became audible. It was returning by another road. They entered the field about a hundred yards in front of it.

The caravans were all freshly painted in rainbow colours. The great marquee was a dirty white. Nevertheless it was this wide, high, flags-surmounted canvas that distinguished the scene.

An unshaven man, in soiled vest and trousers, was driving the pegs still deeper into the earth with swift, hard blows from a

mallet. The clown stopped near him. He said, "Wait here while I look for the boss."

The boy turned to watch the procession. The music swelled to a loud, exciting pitch, then stopped. Surrounded by children, the animals filed past. He saw the girl and backed away round the marquee.

"Hi! Do you want to throw me?"

He turned to see a pony rearing on its hind legs and a girl in riding breeches clinging to its bare back. She steadied the animal with a deft movement of mane-gripping hands and looked down at him challengingly.

"You're dreaming," she accused. "Wake up!"

"I must be. Sorry."

Sitting erect on the now motionless pony, her long hair unruffled, she appeared for a moment statuesque.

"Well? Do you want something?"

"No. Eh—yes. I want to join the circus."

"Good. It's a hard life but you'll learn. I should be able to use you."

"You?"

"Yes. My father's boss."

"Good." He smiled. "I can't act though. 'Twill have to be as a tent-hand or something."

"Just what I'd in mind. There's my father."

The clown and a burly, bowler-hatted man were approaching the spot where the circus-hand was securing a peg.

"Giddy up, Rover!" And the circus-girl and the boy went to them. She announced, "Here's a hand for you, dad."

"So you're it." The burly man examined the boy suspiciously. "You don't look a hard worker."

"He's willing," said the circus-girl.

"That so? Well, boy, you'll need to be and more. Circus life is not so colourful."

"Be warned," said the clown. "You're up long before the sun—after trying to sleep with others on the dirty floor of a moving caravan."

The boy became eager. "I'll love it!"

Boss and boy regarded each other as the mallet thundered rhythmically.

The boss snatched the mallet. "Here!" he challenged. "Show us what you're made of."

The boy snatched it from him.

"Done anything like this before?" demanded the boss.

"No. But this mallet feels good."

"You'll come off your high horse at this work. Strike me home-sick!"

The boy had raised the mallet high above his head. Down it came—and missed the peg.

Girl, clown, and circus-hand laughed.

The boss roared, "You'll never do, never!"

"Give him a chance, dad." She was in earnest now. "He'll learn. Can't you laugh?"

"No! I've enough clowns. This one can take his mallet-act some other place."

The boy dropped the mallet and looked defiantly into each of their unsmiling faces. Then he turned and strode towards the gate.

"Lucky boy!" sighed the clown.

ROBERT O'DONOGHUE

THE PAINTING

(To J.T.)

I know
This mirrored day is mine for ever.
When Night comes,
When deluge of cities on angry pavements,
Or din of savagery, come, I know this rest
Is mine.

Here, where the earth is,
There, where you have the sea,
They will wind all sky and wave
In their racing ropes of steel.

Soon, and forever, the grey, cold concrete Giant
Will rise
Whittling on whirring wings of smoke
Where peaks and grasses were.
And the haunted bog will ring with laughter,
And the gay bric-a-brac of tenements.

They will drive their arguments into the hills,
And their tractors to trample the moor.
They will send their clerks to shatter the brook,
And their kings to scrape out the stars.

Then, and forever, the gaunt, cold concrete Town
Will rise
Surely on striding steps of iron
Where trees and mosses were.
And the haunted bush will sing with slaughter,
And the gay rag-and-tag of regiments.

Here, where the earth is,
There, where you have the sea,
They will wind all birth and death
In their racing ropes of steel.

But know
This summer day is mine forever,
Whatever flood-tides rise,
What rivers of men in angry torrents,
What din of passions, rise, I hold this rest
Is mine.

WILLIAM WALSH

IN THE MIDLANDS

JIM lay dead. He died alone in the house and he lay where he died; there on the bed made of straw covered with sacks, and more sacks over him. He had only one eye, and no glass eye because that fell out and broke long before. He had a beard, and never changed his shirt. He milked the cows and he used to drive them down the road every morning about eleven o'clock. The day before his death, the neighbours had seen him putting them out at eight o'clock in the morning.

That was the change for death, they said, afterwards. He was near seventy and he was the omen of dirtiness in the district. They used to tease the girls about the nice boy they had for them: the boy would be Jim.

The Jacksons were queer, but they only went queer in latter years; in the last thirty years or so. Time was, when Jim Jackson wore tailor-made clothes and a trilby hat, and a handkerchief, sticking up in his breast pocket. Then the mother died. She had been a decent woman and kept a house that any man could enter. After she died the old father got a bit queer, and then the queerness took hold of the lot of them. It was one queer thing after another! First, the old man fell out with the Rector, and next thing the whole lot of them stopped going to church. But that wasn't all. They held prayer meetings of their own in the house. And they expected their neighbours to come to the meetings. Only a few came. The others balked at being baptised at Jackson's old dirty well, which was hardly surprising, since the ducks were swimming around on the top of the well, and the sides of it were coated with green slime.

Anyway, the prayer meetings fell through. But, although the neighbours went back to church, the Jacksons never went in through the door of the church again. Jim, they said, read the Bible, but Sam became a real savage. Then the old father died. He was dead for two days before they told anyone, and they were near never burying him, but, odd and all as they were, they held a wake over him all the same. They didn't shut up the door and go to bed the evening of the old man's funeral either, as people thought they would do. No, they didn't. Sam went up to the lads who dug the grave. "Now lads, there's a few dozen o' stout back at the house for you," he said, and he included all at the graveside in the glance of his hospitality.

But even that day was not let pass without a bit of queerness. The oats were uncut and the weather was broken. When he was pulling a cork at the window Sam saw the day was taking up a bit.

"We might be able to finish the oats, yet," he said to Jim.

The rain came down again a minute after.

"And a good job it did!" said the neighbours. The like of a man working on the day of his father's funeral was never known or heard.

After the old father died they no longer lived in a natural way at all. No woman ever put her hand to the house. Jim cooked. He made the bread too, boiled the potatoes, and the baker's van never stopped at the door.

The old father had left fourteen hundred pounds in the bank, but he left the place to Jim. So Sam got all the money. And Sam was a hard burser. All Jim got was the money for the eggs he collected. One time, during the war, he got thirty shillings for a bucket of eggs from a travelling man, but he never got that much again. Eggs went down after the war. They were hardly worth collecting after a while.

Jim was a great worker. He'd roll up his sleeves above his elbows, and he'd let down his braces. He was a great man to bind corn or stook it. There was no softness in his life. There was no woman. There was no rest.

The neighbours said it wasn't christian the way Jim worked all day, wet or fine, with only the one difference that he'd throw an old sack over his shoulders on a day that was wet. At night he couldn't work. He'd sit in the black kitchen in front of the few sods of turf that Sam would bring in grudgingly and throw down on the hearth. If it had been a wet day you would see the steam rising from his clothes all the time. He never went beyond his own fields, and save to go out and work he never went beyond his own door.

Sam was the one that went out, when there was need for going. Sam went to the fairs, and did all the business. He went to more fairs than any man around the place, because he was a cautious buyer, and he'd go to a dozen fairs before he'd buy one beast. And when he sold one, the money would go straight into the bank without as much as a penny going into the hands of the shopkeepers.

There was nothing in the house. When the mother was alive there was a dresser at the back of the kitchen filled with coloured delph. But there wasn't a chip of it to be seen now. It was the local opinion that they must have fired it at each other from time to time. The day the old man got bad there hadn't been as much as a basin in the house when the doctor came.

"I want a basin," he said to Sam, looking around the kitchen.

Sam stooped down to the ashes on the hob and took up a tin that they used for boiling eggs.

"That's not a basin," said the doctor. And Sam had to go out and get the loan of a basin from somewhere.

There was no furniture in the house either, except an old table in the corner, and two old hard chairs without any backs to them. When the neighbours came to Jim's wake they had to stand up around the wall. Sam was the only one sitting down.

"I'm sorry for your trouble, Sam." Everyone said the same

IRISH WRITING

thing to him. And Sam had the same answer every time.

"We know not the day nor the hour," he said, "and it's the same with the beast in the field."

"He's taking it bad," said the school-master to Christy Conroy, as they stood outside the house, after doing their turn in the room with the corpse.

"I didn't think he had that much nature in him," said Christy.

Just then Sam put his head out of the door. "Christy," he said, "I want you to give me a hand to do something in the morning."

"I will, to be sure," said Christy, leaning up from the wall readily. "What is it?"

Sam looked broken. The heart seemed to have gone out of him. He was no longer rough and hard.

"I lost a beast yesterday with the murrain," he said. "I want you to give me a hand to bury her."

"To be sure," said Christy again, giving a glance at the master.

"Thanks," said Sam, and he went back into the house.

"Did you hear that?" said Christy to the master. "A beast died on him. That's what had him upset. He's more put out about the beast than he is about Jim."

"Ah, I wouldn't say that," said the master, but he couldn't keep back the grin from his face.

A nice funeral turned out the day they buried Jim. Jim had lived all his life in the place and he had been a harmless man. It wasn't for Sam's sake the people went to the grave. And Sam got no share of the kind things that were said about Jim.

"I hear he wanted to bury the man without a coffin," said Christy to the master, remembering the way the master had grinned over the jibe he made at the wake.

"Come now, that's uncharitable," said the master, but this time he smacked his lips.

As a matter of fact it wasn't true about the coffin. The day after Jim died Sam went down to the village to see about it. If you give people cause to talk they'll never know when to stop.

The hired man dug the grave. It was more like a hole for a bullock; as broad as it was long. The man that dug it knew nothing about digging graves, but he was willing. He had strong arms. He did his best. It was deep anyway. The minister came to the grave too, though he was hardly asked.

"It's a wonder," says Conroy, "he didn't do to him what he did to the doctor."

Sam had sent word for the doctor after Jim got bad. It was the same doctor that had made the trouble over the basin for the old father, and this time he took his time about coming. Before he set out he received another message from Sam to tell him he needn't come, that the man was dying. At any rate, whether he was sent for or not the minister was at the cemetery. He kept the grave open for a quarter of an hour praying into it.

"Take care," said Christy, moving back from the edge, and

whispering to the people next to him. "Take care. He'll rise him up if he prays much longer."

Christy was the only Catholic that went into the cemetery. The rest of the neighbours that were Catholics stood in the road outside the wall. The Protestants all went in, of course, although they didn't all go up to the top of the hill where the grave was dug, because there was a bitter wind. They stood on the paths, or went half way up and stopped. And they left their hats on their heads. Those that went right up to the grave took their hats off their crowns, but held them close to the sides of their heads with their right hands. Sam was the only one with his hat hanging down in his hand.

After the funeral Sam didn't stir out at all. The hired boy that dug the grave did all that was to be done. He did Jim's work too. He boiled the potatoes and he swept out the muck that came in the door. He was no hand at baking bread, though, so the baker's van had to call. But Sam only let it come to the end of the lane, and the hired boy ran out across the field and ran back with the loaves.

"It's hardly likely he'll let the boy go to the fair for him," said the neighbours, remembering the hard bargains Sam drove, and that he wouldn't even trust Jim with the sale of a beast.

But when the next fair day came around they saw the boy come down the lane, driving the beast to the fair.

"He's surely getting queer in the head," said the people. They made a distinction between being queer, and being queer in the head.

"I'd better go down and have a talk with him," said the minister.

But all Sam could talk about was Jim; about Jim, and about the beast that died.

"I never thought the like would happen," he said. "The man neglected himself. If he told me the way he was at the start, I'd have got him a paper of salts."

"Did he have an injection?"

"He did, but sure it was too late. I think if he'd got the injection at the start he'd have been alright."

"Well, of course Sam, an injection is generally regarded as a last resort," said the minister to make things easier for him.

"It's severe, you know."

"It is. It's severe on man or beast," said Sam.

The minister got no chance to say whatever he meant to say. "These people reason according to animal life," he thought, as he went away. "Their only standard is the land and the animals." He felt powerless.

After the minister left, Sam sat down in the porch in his shirt sleeves. It had been raining all day. A few bedraggled hens were hunched up under a bush. At the end of the yard the mare stood with her back to the field gate, the rain streaming down her quarters. The rain collected in little puddles in the yard. Over in the dray-shed the dog lay on a sack looking out steadily at the rain.

IRISH WRITING

"God Almighty is angry with the people," thought Sam. He sat there at the doorway of the house. Over a hundred years ago his grandfather bought the house and farm for a hundred pounds. He came there with only two goats to give him a sup of milk. Sam's father built up the stock. And he and Jim had worked the land for over sixty years. He looked out in silence over the muddy doorway.

After a while the young lad came into the yard with a sack over his shoulders driving the cows and calves. Their red hides were stained dark with wet. Lately Sam did not milk them or take any notice of them. But that was nothing. Wasn't his meadow still uncut, although it was the end of July and past time to get it down. It was out there rotting in the rain; the grasses twisted and knotted. It would take a good man now to mow them. He did not get his turnips thinned either; they were gone wild.

It was hard to know what was wrong with him. Was it the loss of Jim, or was it the loss of the beast that died with murrain that bothered him. It was hardly the loss of the beast, because he did all he could to save her. But the same couldn't be said about Jim. Maybe he thought bad of Jim. They say he went to the shop for a packet of salts for him, and when they could not give him a penny packet of salts he would not take a twopenny one. He went back for it next day, right enough, but it was too late then.

"He'll go queer altogether," said Bridie Maguire, a widow in the next lane. "Someone ought to speak to him. He ought to be made go to church. That was the beginning of their downfall, when they stayed away from the church."

Christy Conroy undertook to speak to Sam.

"It's a shame for you," he said, abruptly walking into the house one day. "You're living here like a heathen. You ought to go to church at least."

Christy expected that Sam would set fire to him with curses. But Sam was quiet and respectable. And he agreed to go to church. That made everyone think he was out of his mind for sure. But he didn't go as far as going to church all the same. The only thing he did was to stop cutting thistles in his fields on Sundays. But since that was the only thing he did at all now on the land it was hardly right to have stopped him.

A feeling of frightened curiosity about him began to spread over the countryside. Then, one evening, one of Bridie Maguire's cows got sick for calving. She was a bad case and the man that was working in the place said they had better send for someone.

"There would be no one better than Sam Jackson if he wasn't getting so queer," said the man.

"Queer or not he'd be the best man to get if only he'd come," said Bridie. She was at her wits' end. "Send word to him, anyway," she said.

They sent word to Sam.

"He'll never come," said Bridie, standing in her own lane.

and looking across the hedge to Sam's lane. She saw her own man go up to Sam's door. A minute later Sam came out the door with his cap on his head.

"It's good of him to come," said Bridie to the men in the yard. "We're always on bad terms, falling out over trespass and fences and the like." She was all praise for him. But when Sam came into the yard, he did not spare Bridie. He examined the cow.

"It's twisted inside in her," he said.

A little amber hoof was sticking out, and after a while a little black nose with a piece of a dark tongue protruding, appeared.

"I'll have to get it straight," said Sam to the men, ignoring Bridie, and he pushed back the head and slid his arm into the cow. "It's the hard drew yoke," he said, and this time he turned to Bridie. "The calf will have to come from her in bits."

Bridie shivered. "Oh my God!" she said. "Did you ever see a calf coming in bits, Christy?" she asked Christy Conroy.

Christy was leaning against the doorway in his shirt sleeves. He had a rope in his hand and his pipe was stuck in the corner of his mouth.

"I didn't," he said, "but I heard tell of it." He wasn't looking at Bridie. He was looking at Sam. Sam was hard at work now. With his free hand he took off his cap and threw it in the corner. His little short black Protestant curls fell over his forehead and were glued there with sweat. He pushed the calf right back and after a while he drew out a little amber hoof and held it with his hand. Then he put in his other hand and pulled out another. He held them together for a moment and sighed heavily with relief.

Then he shouted at the men. "Lay down that rope Conroy and hold these."

Conroy gripped the hooves and the bit of the legs that had come. He took them from Sam one at a time. Sam took the rope and slipped a running noose on one end of it. He took a leg from Conroy and slipped the noose over it. He pushed the rope close and pulled it tight. Conroy held it while he fixed up the other leg. "Pull a bit," said Sam. They pulled and the calf came a little after that.

"Good men," said the workers in the yard. At that Christy began to pull like mad.

"God damn it, man. D'ye want to drag her to pieces?" roared Sam. "Wait till she forces."

Then the poor brute heaved her big body and they pulled again. The calf didn't come any, and the cow rocked with a grunt. Her big wondering eyes were bulging. She was in great trouble; the pain could only be seen in her terror-stricken eyes.

They pulled again and sometimes the calf came a little. Sometimes Sam just told them to hold tight. Conroy was down on one knee. "Pull down," said Sam to him. His pipe nearly went up in his gum when he pulled. "Now, Conroy," said Sam. They pulled again and the two hind legs came clear. "Keep a steady hold now," shouted Sam in a loud triumphant voice. The big cow moaned. Then she forced. And suddenly a frothy little black

body come slithering out on the ground.

Sam lifted up its head and blew into its ears. Then he slipped off the ropes and rubbed it hard with hay. The little calf never moved. Sam dragged him hastily back into the hay rick and lifted up its head again. This time he put his finger in the calf's mouth. The little calf snuffled and his ears shook.

"There's nothing wrong with him," said Christy Conroy.

"Thank God," said the workman.

"It was a bloody near thing," said Sam.

They put the calf in a barrow and wheeled him over to one of the stables. Bridie Maguire came across the yard.

"Is everything all right, Sam?"

"Ah yes," said Sam, "a fine calf."

"I suppose she wasn't as bad as you thought. Come in now, and have a bottle of stout."

"I'd sooner have it out here," said Sam, sitting down on the shafts of a cart that was standing near the wall.

Bridie brought him out a bottle and a corkscrew. Sam pushed back his cap and drank.

"The weather is better now, Sam," said Bridie. "I got my hay up. Your trouble kept you back a lot."

Sam stood up and left down the empty glass on the shaft. "Keep an eye to that cow," he said.

"I will," said Bridie. "Thanks for coming over, Sam."

"Ah, what signifies it?"

He crossed the stile at the end of the lane and started home across the fields. The grass was moist and rich with all the rain. The weather had improved a bit though, and it had only rained a few sharp showers that day. As Sam walked he kicked little sprays from the grass; half dew and half rain. It was almost dark, and the skies were a settled, empty grey. It would be a good day to-morrow.

When Sam was crossing the fence into his own land, he stopped for a minute. It was quiet as the grave. He could just see the smoke lying in the air over the barracks. The field he went through was an uncut meadow, and he kept along by the ditch. The hedge was heavy with the wet, and the bank was covered with wet shaggy grass. He kicked the meadow; the top was a bit wet but it was drying out all the same. He passed by the cattle in the grassland near the house. He looked at the good black heifer. She smelled of sweet and soft fat, as she stood there chewing her cud, with her short forelegs deep in the grass. She had a good deep chest. A good beast! And only the other day she was a calf like the one he was after taking from the cow.

That was a good calf. There was nothing like calves of your own rearing. He lit his pipe and stood there thinking. He had six young calves, and the cows were all in calf again. Times were queer and the beast that died was a big loss. Still his mind kept going back to the calf he had taken from the cow. People would tell you that calves drink more than twice what you get for them afterwards. No matter, the money goes, but the calf is like a bank.

Maybe it does cost a lot to rear them, but you get your money in a lump afterwards. It was false talk about ready money that had the country the way it was, with fellows running around with this thing and that thing, and talking about the cost of a beast's keep by the month, and the loss you'd be at by keeping her, as if you were paying for every blade of grass she ate. Sure you had to pay the rent anyway. No matter what anyone said, stock was the only thing there was anything in in the end.

The cattle were only dark stealthy shadows now. There was a light in the window of a house up on the hill of Oughter. The dew mist had cleared away, and it was a clear warm night. The old sycamore tree stirred a little with a fresh breeze as he walked into the yard. And as he moved on the stones a dog barked a hollow far-off bark up in Halley's yard. He slipped the rope that that was tied to a bogey wheel in the dray-shed over the dog's head. "Lie down," he growled. He heard the drying wind blowing through the trees as he went into the house. Aye, it would be a good day to-morrow.

He sat down on a stool in under the chimney and threw a couple of sods of turf on the smouldering fire. The cement floor was broken into rubble in patches. The walls were covered with brown flowered wall paper, withered and stained with smoke, and here and there it was torn off from the rough gravelled wall. Torn strips of it hung down in other places.

Sam wedged himself into the corner and sat there with dark obstinate eyes staring into the fire. He had gone on like this in his brutal independent way for close on forty years. The cattle were sold and money made. He roared at horses and took calves from cows, and dosed cattle. He ploughed his bit of tillage and reaped the bit of corn that was sowed, and all the time no thought of woman entered his head. He and Jim had their creed and they were ruthlessly loyal to it. There was no comfort; no improvements were made; there was no one to come after them. But they kept the land in good heart, they kept good stock and no penny was laid out. He and Jim had fought with each other and lived together without feeling for each other. They lived for their creed of work and cattle. But Jim was dead and gone now, and things were queer without him. People said he should sell out, or set the land. The minister called one day after the funeral and said he should get married. People said they were sorry for him.

Sam spat meditatively into the fire. He thought too about the beast that died. Still, that was a great black heifer out in the field, and the other day she was only a calf. That was a fine calf that he took from Bridie Maguire's cow. It looked dead at first, too, until it sneezed and shook his ears. In a few months it would be a young bullock. Sam heartened somewhat. Then he thought of the turnips that had gone wild and the meadows that were twisted and beaten into the ground and he slumped deeper into the old chair.

He sat there in the darkness for hours, lighting his pipe now and then with a bit of turf. The wind curled around in the chim-

ney and rattled the window occasionally. A motor car passed along the road, on to its suspicious small hours purpose. It was a dead silent night, with dark memories of almost sixty years circling around the house. Soon it would be light and he would be staring out of the window at the meadows that were wet and matted like a fleece. It was a land of dereliction. Still, the cattle grew and fattened.

All through the night, Sam Jackson's stiff mechanical mind worked hard. He wedged himself down in the corner with his few decayed teeth fastened on his pipe. A great struggle went on within him. He had only one solid post of reason to hang on to. A lot of queer notions went through a man's head. A dry strong light edged through the dirty window before he threw himself down on the straw and sacks that lay on the wreck of a bed in the room off the kitchen.

The next morning when the man that worked for Bridie Maguire came in to his breakfast after putting out the cows, he wore a look of astonishment.

"Go out, Miss, and listen to the music," he said.

Bridie Maguire went out in the yard. Sure enough a mowing machine rattled steadily in Sam Jackson's meadow. He roared at the horses.

"He'll never cut it," she said. But all day long as she went about her work she stopped up uneasily to listen for the sound of the mowing that came incessantly over the hedges.

SHEILA PIM

MRS. HALLIGAN

THOUGH nothing is as it used to be—old families dying out, old landmarks gone—it is wonderful how some things go on and on. Castlebrownell always had been the scene of a garden party at the time when the rhododendrons were out. The rhododendrons made such a show that something had to be done about them, and even the new English owners felt the compulsion. They had returned no calls as yet, and there were still many people who had never set eyes on them, for they went about in a closed car and did not attend either church; but when the rhododendrons all burst into pink-trumpeting flower, the double banks of them surging towards each other along the whole length of the drive, there was no possibility of ignoring such an event, and so the gardens were opened in aid of the District Nurses. Again, as in June's long past, there came an afternoon when the life of the countryside converged on the big house, and people came from all the houses round about, though not necessarily the same people, or the same kind of people, who had been invited in the Brownells' time.

A very large car, the Chrysler from Halligans' which could take six with luggage, pushed its way between the double banks of bushes, knocking off flowers as it passed. Planted a long way back from the drive, fifty years ago, at the time when the new varieties were being brought in from Tibet, the bushes had grown and grown, and now every year the drive was narrower. Over-taking a single cyclist, the car laboured civilly behind her in first gear. The cyclist, however, dismounted and squeezed into the bushes to let it pass. The only occupants of the Chrysler on this occasion were Mrs. Halligan and Sean, the driver. Mrs. Halligan leaned forward, as she might across the counter of Halligans' General Stores, all smiles and recognition and apology. The hand she waved was inflexible in a tight kid glove, but feathers curtsied on her hat. The smoke from the exhaust momentarily obscured the rhododendrons, then thinned away in the air, and the great bulging rear of the car diminished in the green-walled perspective ahead.

Vi Brownell extracted herself and her bicycle from the rhododendrons. If she had known whose car it was she could have ridden on straight-backed as on a horse, compelling Mrs. Halligan to crawl behind her all the way to where the drive widened into the gravel sweep. It pleased her to entertain the possibility that she might have done that. "Osprey feathers, how cruel!" she said to herself. "And the fur coat, winter and summer." Though she did not victimise ospreys, the skin of some beast

IRISH WRITING

trapped years ago in the Arctic hung round her own shoulders, for one can blind oneself to cruelty but not vulgarity. But Miss Brownell liked when possible to find moral reasons why Mrs. Halligan's presence jarred her.

Miss Brownell—she was not one of the Brownells who formerly owned the Castle, but a distant cousin—remounted and pedalled on. She had emerged slightly dishevelled from the bushes; flowers, shedding at a touch, had lighted incongruously on her felt hat, and a twig had tweaked at the gathers of her limp summer frock. She was not inclined to worry about such minor mishaps; ladies who garden and live in the country become accustomed to them. Vi was confident in her own mind of looking a lady, and that anyone whose opinion mattered would consider her better dressed than Mrs. Halligan.

The new owners could congratulate themselves on their choice of a day. It was garden party weather, and the sort to bring people out. Though they would know if they had any perception, which was still uncertain, that people would turn out on the wettest day, just to see what English money had done to the place. Some people would even have welcomed a wet day, which might have caused the house to be opened as well as the gardens. And the older residents would have come in any case, to give a lead. Even though one's call had not been returned there was no reason why the charity should suffer.

Though as far as example went, Mrs. Halligan's was more likely to swell the attendance than Miss Brownell's. Mrs. Halligan's bold front was no mere facade. She exercised great influence over all who had credit accounts at the stores, and through her work on committees she had in her bestowal such benefits as free milk and even County Council cottages. Miss Brownell and her friends, sitting on the same committees, had to take Mrs. Halligan's word for the deservingness of the cases she recommended, and the funds available for their relief. They might have their own pet candidates, but Mrs. Halligan knew all the poor of the place individually. Miss Brownell and her friends did not grudge their time or such subscriptions as they could still afford, but had to be excused from any duties to their neighbours that involved keeping accounts. Mrs. Halligan had the advantage of business experience; it was not to be expected of people in Vi's position that they would have the same grasp of detail.

The rhododendrons parted to disclose ranks of parked cars on the gravel, the Chrysler from the Stores the largest. Evidently no customer had hired it that afternoon, for Mrs. Halligan was not the woman to lose business in the interests of grandeur. Bicycles were stacked along the balustrade of the terrace, leaning heavily on the thick old shoots of a Malmaison rose that twined in and out of the stone pilasters.

Two stone vases which had always been empty in the old days, now each contained a rose bush of polyantha type, covered with flowers the colour of tinned salmon, and potted up, the gardening ladies suspected, specially for the afternoon. This was the kind

of innovation one might expect. Perhaps the new owners would have done something about the pergola leading from the back of the house to the walled garden, which had collapsed many years ago under the burden of the extravagance of the red and white and yellow ramblers. The roses alone would have made June the month for Castlebrownell, even if there had not been the rhododendrons. How much it was to be hoped that the gardens would now again be kept up!

At present no one liked to move far from the house. There was no sign yet of the new owners, but they must shortly appear. The basins of two stone fountains on the terrace had been cleaned out and were filled with winking ripples, from which the sunlight sparkled as from the instruments of a brass band. The occasion, however, did not run to a band, and without noise there was a feeling of emptiness. People stood about uncertainly, eyeing the roses and each other's clothes. They had come in an expectant mood, which is an attitude normal to life but often disappointed. It was computed afterwards by the admission takings that there were more than two hundred present, but this does not look many out of doors, and was not enough to save each from feeling individually conspicuous. The breeze was a little chill for washing frocks, a little warm for tweeds.

Mrs. Halligan liked to see and be seen. Her tight high-heeled shoes must have been painful on the gravel, but she bore this with indifference like all unavoidable ills. She opened her fur coat, and her bust swelled out in spotted silk, a shelf for a necklet of imitation pearls. Between each pearl a brown deposit had collected, like the tartar on Mrs. Halligan's front teeth. Miss Brownell, whom she engaged in conversation, noted such details with inverted satisfaction.

Mrs. Halligan told Miss Brownell the house was beautiful inside. "Interior decoration, you know. Everything in keeping." She knew which Dublin firm had supplied all the furniture, carpets and hangings. Every inch of floor was carpeted and the curtains were all lined. There would not be the least bit of a draught in that house now, even in the worst of winter. "English people like to be comfortable," said Mrs. Halligan, "and why wouldn't they, when they have the money?" She liked comfort herself, though not more than other things such as being in the know, having strings to pull, getting things done and getting her own way. Beyond all these not uncommon inclinations, she brought to any task or organisation the innocent zest of a child making wheels go round. She liked being there on the terrace in her fur coat and high heels, chatting familiarly to Miss Brownell and giving her exclusive items of gossip; and she liked having a moment to look forward to when she would kick off her tight shoes, peel off her frock, unhook her corselet, and sit in the breeze by her bedroom window, through which, behind lace curtains, she could watch all the life of the street.

The reason Mrs. Halligan knew so much about the new owners of Castlebrownell was that she had carefully chosen her time to

call, on information supplied by the sister of a girl who had been taken on as housemaid. It was not a social call; the shopkeeper had not that sort of presumption. She had the pretext of asking for a subscription. It was, in fact, all her doing, and the outcome of her visit, that the gardens had been opened this afternoon to admit the rest of the neighbourhood.

According to Mrs. Halligan the new owners were a very nice, homely couple, and the sort of people who could bring great benefit to the town. They knew how things should be done, they would spend money on the place, and they were ready to be charitable. They didn't mean to entertain—it was a pity there were no young people—but who would grudge them peace and quiet, after all they had gone through over there? That was what they had come to Ireland for: peace and quiet at the end of their days.

"In other words," said Miss Brownell to herself, "she will get money out of them for all her pet schemes and let nobody else come near them." Resolved to prevent this, she became more eager than ever to see these potential fairy godparents.

"Ah, they're both well on in years," continued Mrs. Halligan. "And she's a great invalid; the heart, poor thing. They were afraid the excitement this afternoon would be too much for her, so they're gone up to Dublin for the day."

The announcement tossed out casually by Mrs. Halligan, like a pebble into the basin of the nearest fountain, spread enlarging ripples of disappointment through the crowd. Gradually it was realised that nothing would happen, perhaps nothing in connection with Castlebrownell would ever happen. People drifted away to look at the roses, since that was all there was to do.

Even the roses, to some extent, failed them. The tangle at the back had been cleared, and the ruined pergola taken down, to the indignation of Miss Brownell, who did not like to see beauty sacrificed to tidiness. She now felt that she did not wish to know the new owners. It had been foolish to imagine things could ever again be the same as in her cousins' time. The face of things had changed and the Mrs. Halligans were in command.

Vi was tired. Walking, standing, and bicycling tired her more than they used to do, nor did she eat enough. Depression achieved her undoing. She turned faint and sank down on a tree stump, the stump of a fine beech tree that had been cut for firewood during the war.

Mrs. Halligan's rich voice, filled with concern and sympathy, trickled through a nauseous mist. Mrs. Halligan always noticed everything.

"Miss Brownell, dear, how ill you look! You musn't ride home, I couldn't allow you to, as a Christian. You're coming back with me now, in the car. Never mind about your bicycle, I'll see it's brought home for you. Get in now, Miss Brownell, and you'll be at your own house inside ten minutes. Then you have a liedown and you'll be all right. Sure it's nothing but the heat."

The fainting fit passed off, but not completely enough for Miss Brownell to recover her independence. She had to go home in the Chrysler, where it was hottest of all and smelt of Mrs. Halligan's individual blend of powder and perspiration. Mrs. Halligan, too tactful to dwell on her companion's indisposition, talked instead, as the car butted its way back between the rhododendrons, of how the bushes would have to be cut back as soon as they had done flowering; how the place had been let go, and the amount of clearing there was to be done, and how she had been able to recommend a gardener, the brother of her own cook, a very decent family who had just got one of the new County Council cottages. She spoke too, with satisfaction, of the success of the afternoon, and the surprising number of people who had turned out, of all sorts and classes. "It was quite a cosmopolitan affair," said Mrs. Halligan, not using quite the word she intended. Miss Brownell treasured this up for repetition, deriving thus a tiny tingle of consolation from the dregs of her afternoon.

CONSTANCE MADDEN

DEATH HAS A DELICATE WIT

Death has a delicate wit
Like a blackbird calling in rain.
How did the blackbird discover
Death's pain ?

What secret lives in that throat?
What memory breaks
Through rain-wet branches and speaks
Death's pain?

Why does he call
His nest-mate to cover?
What comfort is now
In lover for lover?

Why do I wait
To hear him entice her again,
What memory for me
Is death's pain?

Will the rain on my cheek
Be a facile tear
When she comes to the tree?

Death has a delicate wit
And a blackbird calls in the rain

JAMES PLUNKETT

WEEP FOR OUR PRIDE

THE door of the classroom was opened by Mr. O'Rourke just as Brother Quinlan was about to open it to leave. They were both surprised and said 'Good morning' to one another as they met in the doorway, and Mr. O'Rourke, although he met Brother Quinlan every morning of his life, gave an expansive but somehow unreal smile and shouted his 'good morning' with bloodcurdling cordiality. They then withdrew to the passage outside to hold a conversation.

In the interval English Poetry books were opened and the class began to repeat lines. They had been given the whole of a poem called 'Lament for the Death of Eoghan Ruadh' to learn. It was very patriotic and dealt with the poisoning of Eoghan Ruadh by the accursed English, and the lines were very long, which made it difficult. The class hated the English for poisoning Eoghan Ruadh because the lines about it were so long. What made it worse was that it was the sort of poem Mr. O'Rourke loved. If it was 'Hail to thee, blythe spirit' he wouldn't mind so much. But he could declaim this one for them in a rich, fruity, provincial baritone and would knock hell out of anybody who had not learned it.

Peter had not learned it. Realising how inadequate were the few minutes left to him he ran his eyes over stanza after stanza and began to murmur fragments from each in hopeless desperation. Swaine, who sat beside him, said

"Do you know this?"

"No," Peter said. "I haven't even looked at it."

"My God," Swaine breathed in horror, "you'll be mangled."

"You could give us a prompt."

"And be torn limb from limb?" said Swaine with conviction. "Not likely."

Peter closed his eyes. It was all his mother's fault. He had meant to come to school early to learn it but the row delayed him. It had been about his father's boots. After breakfast she had found that there were holes in both his shoes. She held them up to the light which was on because the November morning was wet and dark.

"Merciful God, child," she exclaimed, "there's not a sole in your shoes. You can't go out in those."

He was anxious to put them on and get out quickly, but everybody was in bad humour. He didn't dare to say anything. His sister was clearing part of the table and his brother Joseph, who worked, was rooting in drawers and corners and saying to

everybody, "Where the hell is the bicycle pump? You can't leave a thing out of your hand in this house."

"I can wear my sandals," Peter suggested.

"And it spilling out of the heavens— don't be daft, child." Then she said, "What am I to do at all?"

For a moment he hoped he might be kept at home. But his mother told his sister to root among the old boots in the press. Millie went out into the passage. On her way she trod on the cat, which meowed in intense agony.

"Blazes," said his sister, "that bloody cat."

She came in with an old pair of his father's boots, and he was made try them on. They were too big.

"I'm not going out in those," he said. "I couldn't walk in them."

But his mother and sister said they looked lovely. They went into unconvincing ecstasies. They looked perfect they said, each backing up the other. No one would notice.

"They look foolish," he insisted. "I won't wear them."

"You'll do what you're told," his sister said. They were all older than he and each in turn bullied him. But the idea of being made look ridiculous nerved him.

"I won't wear them," he persisted. At that moment his brother Tom came in and Millie said quickly.

"Tom, speak to Peter—he's giving cheek to mammy." Tom was very fond of animals. "I heard the cat," he began, looking threateningly at Peter who sometimes teased it. "What were you doing to it?"

"Nothing," Peter answered. "Millie walked on it." He tried to say something about the boots but the three of them told him to shut up and get out to school. He could stand up to the others but he was afraid of Tom. So he had flopped along in the rain feeling miserable and hating it because people would know he was poor when he had to wear his father's boots.

The door opened and Mr. O'Rourke came in. He was a huge man in tweeds. He was a fluent speaker of Irish and wore the gold Fainne in the lapel of his jacket. Both his wrists were covered with matted black hair.

"Filidheact," he roared and drew a leather from his hip pocket.

Then he shouted "Dun do leabhar" and hit the front desk a ferocious crack with the leather. Mr. O'Rourke was an ardent Gael who gave all his orders in Irish. Someone passed him up a poetry book and the rest closed theirs or turned them face downwards on their desks.

Mr. O'Rourke, his eyes glaring terribly at the ceiling, from which plaster would fall in fine dust when the 3rd year students tramped in or out, began to declaim

"Did they dare, Did They Dare, to slay Eoghan Ruadh O'Neill?
Yes, they slew with poison him they feared to meet with steel "

He clenched his powerful fists and held them up rigidly before his chest.

"May God wither up their hearts, may their blood cease to flow,
May they walk in living death who poisoned Eoghan Roe."

Then quite suddenly, in a business like tone, he said, "You—Daly."

"Me sir?" said Daly, playing for time.

"Yes, you fool," thundered Mr. O'Rourke. "You."

The rest could have drowned Daly for saying 'Me Sir?' It put Mr. O'Rourke in bad humour.

Daly rose and repeated the first four lines. When he was halfway through the second stanza Mr. O'Rourke bawled 'Clancy.' Clancy rose and began to recite. They stood up and sat down as Mr. O'Rourke commanded while he paced up and down the aisles between the seats. Twice he passed close to Peter. He stood for some time by Peter's desk bawling out names. The end of his tweed jacket lay hypnotically along the edge of Peter's desk. Cummins stumbled over the fourth verse and dried up completely.

"Line," Mr. O'Rourke bawled. Cummins, calmly pale, left his desk and stepped out to the side of the class. Two more were sent out. Mr. O'Rourke walked up and down once more and stood with his back to Peter. Looking at the desk at the very back he suddenly bawled 'Farrell.'

Peter's heart jerked. He rose to his feet. The back was still towards him. He looked at it, a great mountain of tweed with a frayed collar over which the thick neck bulged in folds. He could see the antennae of hair which sprouted from Mr. O'Rourke's ears and could smell the chalk-and-ink schoolmaster's smell of him. It was a trick of Mr. O'Rourke's to stand with his back to you and then call your name. It made the shock more acute. Peter gulped and was silent.

"Wail . . ." prompted Mr. O'Rourke.

Peter said "Wail . . ."

Mr. O'Rourke paced up to the head of the class once more.

"Wail—wail him through the island," he said as he walked. Then he turned around suddenly and said "Well, go on."

"Wail, wail him through the island," Peter said once more and stopped.

"Weep," hinted Mr. O'Rourke.

He regarded Peter closely, his eyes narrowing.

"Weep," said Peter, ransacking the darkness of his mind but finding only emptiness.

"Weep, weep, weep," Mr. O'Rourke said, his voice rising.

Peter chanced his arm. He said, "Wail, wail him through the island, weep, weep, weep."

Mr. O'Rourke stood up straight. His face conveyed at once shock, surprise, pain.

"Get out to the line," he roared, "you thick, lazy, good-for-nothing, bloody imbecile. Tell him what it is Clancy." Clancy dithered for a moment, closed his eyes and said,

"Sir—Wail, wail him through the island, weep, weep for our pride
Would that on the battle field our gallant chief had died."

Mr. O'Rourke nodded with dangerous benevolence. As Peter shuffled to the line the boots caught the iron upright of the desk and made a great clamour. Mr. O'Rourke gave him a cut with the leather across the behind. "Did you look at this, Farrell?" he asked.

Peter hesitated and said uncertainly, "No sir."

"It wasn't worth your while, I suppose."

"No sir. I hadn't time, sir."

Just then the clock struck the hour. The class rose. Mr. O'Rourke put the leather under his left armpit and crossed himself. "In ainm an athair," he began. While they recited the Hail Mary, Peter, unable to pray, stared at the leafless rain-soaked trees in the square and the serried rows of pale, prayerful faces. They sat down.

Mr. O'Rourke turned to the class.

"Farrell hadn't time," he announced pleasantly. Then he looked thunderously again at Peter. "If it was an English penny dreadful about Public Schools or London crime you'd find time to read it quick enough, but when it's about the poor hunted martyrs and felons of your own unfortunate country by a patriot like Davis you've no time for it. You're the makings of a fine little Britisher." With genuine pathos Mr. O'Rourke then recited,

"The weapon of the Sassenach met him on his way
And he died at Cloch Uachter upon St. Leonard's day."

"That was the dear dying in any case, but if he died for the likes of you Farrell it was the dear bitter dying, no mistake about it."

Peter said, "I meant to learn it."

"If I can't preach respect for the patriot dead into you, then honest to my stockings I'll beat respect into you. Hand."

Peter held it out. He pulled his coat sleeve down over his wrist. The leather came down six times with a resounding impact. He tried to keep his thumb out of the way because if it hit you on the thumb it stung unbearably. But after four heavy slaps the hand began to curl of its own accord, curl and cripple like a little piece of tinfoil in a fire, until the thumb lay powerless across the palm, and the pain burned in his chest and stiffened in his toes. But worse than the pain was the fear that he would cry. He was turning away when Mr. O'Rourke said, "Just a moment Farrell, I haven't finished."

Mr. O'Rourke gently took the fingers of Peter's hand, smoothing them out as he drew them once more into position. "To teach you I'll take no defiance," he said, in a friendly tone, and raised the leather. Peter tried to hold his crippled hand steady.

He could not see properly going back to his desk and again the boots deceived him and he tripped and fell. As he picked

himself up, Mr. O'Rourke, about to help him with another, though gentler, tap of the leather, stopped and exclaimed, "Merciful God, child, where did you pick up the boots?"

The rest looked with curiosity. Clancy, who had twice excelled himself, tittered. Mr. O'Rourke said, "And what's the funny joke Clancy?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Soft as a woman's was your voice, O'Neill, bright was your eye," recited Mr. O'Rourke in a voice as soft as a woman's, brightness in his eyes. "Continue, Clancy." But Clancy, the wind taken out of his sails, missed and went out to join the other three. Peter put his head on the desk, his raw hands tightly under his armpits, and nursed his wounds while the leather thudded patriotism and literature into the other, unmurmuring, four.

Swaine said nothing for a time. Now and then he glanced at Peter's face. He was staring straight at the book. His hands were tender, but the pain had ebbed away. Each still hid its rawness under a comfortably warm armpit.

"You got a heck of a hiding," Swaine whispered at last. Peter said nothing.

"Ten is too much. He's not allowed to give you ten. If he gave me ten I'd bring my father up to him."

Swaine was small, but his face was large and bony and when he took off his glasses sometimes to wipe them there was a small red weal on the bridge of his nose. Peter grunted and Swaine changed the subject.

"Tell us who owns the boots. They're not your own."

"Yes they are," Peter lied.

"Go on," Swaine said. "Who owns them? Are they your brother's?"

"Shut up."

"Tell us," Swaine persisted. "I won't tell a soul. Honest." He regarded Peter with sly curiosity. He whispered avidly. "I know they're not your own, but I wouldn't tell it. We sit beside one another. We're pals. You can tell me."

"Curiosity killed the cat." Peter said.

Swaine had the answer to that. With a sly grin he rejoined, "Information made him fat."

"If you must know," Peter said, growing tired, "they're my father's. And if you tell anyone I'll break you up in little pieces. You just try breathing a word."

Swaine sat back, satisfied. If a fellow was expelled or anything mysterious happened, Swaine always knew the ins and outs of it.

Mr. O'Rourke was saying that the English used treachery when they poisoned Eoghan Roe. But what could be expected of the English except treachery.

"Hoof of the horse," he quoted, "horn of a bull, smile of a Saxon." Three perils. Oliver Cromwell read his bible while he quartered infants at their mothers' breasts. People said let's forget all that. But we couldn't begin to forget it until we had our full

freedom. Our own tongue, the sweet Gaelic teanga, must be restored once more as the spoken language of our race. It was the duty of all to study and work towards that end.

"And those of us who haven't time must be shown how to find the time. Isn't that a fact, Farrell?" he said. The class laughed. But the clock struck and Mr. O'Rourke put the lament regretfully aside.

"Mathematics," he announced. "Ceimseata."

He had hoped it would continue to rain during lunch time so that they could stay in the classroom. But when the automatic bell clanged loudly and Mr. O'Rourke opened the frosted window to look out, it had stopped. They trooped down the stairs. They pushed and jostled one another. Peter kept his hand for safety on the bannisters. Going down the stairs made the boots seem larger. He made straight for the urinal and stayed there until the old brother whose duty it was for obscure moral reasons to patrol the place had passed through twice. The second time he said to him, "My goodness boy, go out into the fresh air with your playmates. Shoo—boy,—shoo," and stared at Peter's retreating back with perplexity and suspicion.

Dillon came over as he was unwrapping his lunch and said, "Did they dare, did they dare to slay Eoghan Roe O'Neill."

"Oh shut up," Peter said.

Dillon linked his arm and said, "You took an awful packet." Then with genuine admiration he added, "You took it super. He aimed for your wrist too. Not a peek. You were wizard. Cripes. When I saw him getting ready for the last four I was praying you wouldn't cry." They were all praying he wouldn't cry.

"I never cried yet," Peter asserted.

"I know, but he lammed his hardest. You shouldn't have said you hadn't time."

"He wouldn't make me cry," Peter said grimly, "not if he got up at four o'clock in the morning to try it."

O'Rourke had lammed him alright, but there was no use trying to do anything about it. If he told his father and mother they would say he richly deserved it. It was his mother should have been lammed and not he.

"The Irish," Dillon added sagaciously, "are an unfortunate bloody race. The father often says so."

"Don't tell me," Peter said with feeling.

"I mean look at us. First Cromwell knocks hell out of us for being too Irish and then Rorky slaughters us for not being Irish enough."

It was true. It was a pity they couldn't make up their minds.

Peter felt the comfort of Dillon's friendly arm. "The boots are my father's," he confided suddenly, "my own had holes." That made him feel better.

"What are you worrying about?" Dillon said, reassuringly. "They look all right to me."

When they were passing the row of water taps with the chained

drinking vessels a voice cried, "There's Farrell now." A piece of crust hit Peter on the nose.

"Caesar sends his legate," Dillon murmured. They gathered round.

Clancy said, "Hey boys, Farrell is wearing someone else's boots."

"Who lifted you into them?"

"Wait now," said Clancy, "let's see him walk. Go on—walk Farrell."

Peter backed slowly towards the wall. He backed slowly until he felt the ridge of a downpipe hard against his back. Dillon came with him. "Lay off, Clancy," Dillon said. Swaine was there too. He was smiling, a small cat fat with information.

"Where did you get them Farrell?"

"Pinched them."

"Found them in an ashbin."

"Make him walk," Clancy insisted. "Let's see you walk, Farrell."

"They're my own," Peter said. "They're a bit big—that's all. They'll shrink after a while."

"Come on Farrell—tell us whose they are."

The grins grew wider.

Clancy said, "They're his father's."

"No they're not," Peter denied quickly.

"Yes they are. He told Swaine. Didn't he Swaine? He told you they were his father's."

Swaine's grin froze. Peter fixed him with terrible eyes.

"Well didn't he, Swaine? Go on, tell the chaps what he told you. Didn't he say they were his father's?"

Swaine edged backwards. "That's right," he said, "he did."

"Hey, you chaps," Clancy said, impatiently, "let's make him walk. I vote . . ."

At that moment Peter, with a cry, sprang on Swaine. His fist smashed the glasses on Swaine's face. As they rolled over on the muddy ground, Swaine's nails tore his cheek. Peter saw the white terrified face under him. He beat at it in frenzy until it became covered with mud and blood.

"Cripes," Clancy said in terror, "look at Swaine's glasses. Haul him off lads." They pulled him away and he lashed out awkwardly with the big boots which had caused all the trouble. Swaine's nose and lips were bleeding so they took him over to the water tap and washed him. Dillon, who stood alone with Peter, brushed his clothes as best he could and fixed his collar and tie.

"You broke his glasses," he said. "There'll be a proper rucky if old Quinny sees him after lunch."

"I don't care about Quinny."

"I do then," Dillon said fervently. "He'll quarter us all in our mother's arms."

They sat with their arms folded while Brother Quinlan in the high chair at the head of the class, gave religious instruction.

Swaine kept his bruised face lowered. Without the glasses it had a bald, maimed look, as though his eyebrows, or a nose, or an eye, were missing. They had exchanged no words since the fight. Peter was aware of the boots. They were a defeat, something to be ashamed of. His mother only thought they would keep out the rain. She didn't understand that it would be better to have wet feet. People did not laugh at you because your feet were wet.

Brother Quinlan was speaking of our relationship to one another, of the boy to his neighbour and of the boy to his God. We communicated with one another, he said, by looks, gestures, speech. But these were surface contacts. They conveyed little of what went on in the mind, and nothing at all of the soul. Inside us, the greatest and the humblest of us, a whole world was locked. Even if we tried we could convey nothing of that interior world, that life which was nourished, as the poet had said, within the brain. In our interior life we stood without friend or ally—alone. In the darkness and silence of that interior and eternal world the immortal soul and its God were at all times face to face. No one else could peer into another's soul, neither our teacher, nor our father or mother, nor even our best friend. But God saw all. Every stray little thought which moved in that inaccessible world was as plain to Him as if it were thrown across the bright screen of a cinema. That was why we must be as careful to discipline our thoughts as our actions. Custody of the eyes, custody of the ears, but above all else custody . . .

Brother Quinlan let the sentence trail away and fixed his eyes on Swaine.

"You—boy," he said in a voice tired but patient. "What are you doing with that handkerchief?"

Swaine's nose had started to bleed again. He said nothing. "Stand up, boy," Brother Quinlan commanded. He had glasses himself, which he wore during class on the tip of his nose. He was a big man too, and his head was bald in front, which made his large forehead appear even more massive. He stared over the glasses at Swaine.

"Come up here," he said, screwing up his eyes, the fact that something was amiss with Swaine's face dawning gradually on him. Swaine came up to him, looking woebegone, still dabbing his nose with the handkerchief. Brother Quinlan contemplated the battered face for some time. He turned to the class.

"Whose handiwork is this?" he asked quietly. "Stand up, the boy responsible for this."

For a while nobody stirred. There was an uneasy stillness. Poker faces looked at the desks in front of them and waited. Peter looked around and saw Dillon gazing at him hopefully. After an unbearable moment feet shuffled and Peter stood up.

"I am sir," he said.

Brother Quinlan told Clancy to take Swaine out to the yard to bathe his nose. Then he spoke to the class about violence, and what was worse, violence to a boy weaker than oneself. That was the resort of the bully and the scoundrel—physical violence—

—The Fist. At this Brother Quinlan held up his large bunched fist so that all might see it. Then with the other hand he indicated the picture of the Sacred Heart. Charity and Forbearance, he said, not revenge and intolerance, those were qualities most dear to Our Blessed Lord.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, Farrell. Do you think what you have done is a heroic or a creditable thing?"

"No sir."

"Then why did you do it boy?"

Peter made no answer. It was no use making an answer. It was no use saying Swaine had squealed about the boots being his father's. Swaine's face was badly battered. But deep inside him Peter felt battered too. Brother Quinlan couldn't see your soul. He could see Swaine's face, though, when he fixed his glasses on him properly. Brother Quinlan took his silence for defiance.

"A blackguardly affair," he pronounced. "A low, cowardly assault. Hold out your hand."

Peter hesitated. There was a limit. He hadn't meant not to learn the Poetry and it wasn't his fault about the boots.

"He's been licked already, sir," Dillon said. "Mr. O'Rourke gave him ten."

"Mr. O'Rourke is a discerning man," said Brother Quinlan, "but he doesn't seem to have given him half enough. Think of the state of that poor boy who has just gone out."

Peter could think of nothing to say. He tried hard to word his defence but it was useless. There were no words there. Reluctantly he presented his hand. It was mudstained. Brother Quinlan looked at it with distaste. Then he proceeded to beat hell out of him, and charity and forbearance into him, in the same way as Mr. O'Rourke earlier had hammered in patriotism and respect for Irish History.

It was raining again when he was going home. Usually there were three or four to go home with him, but this afternoon he went alone. He did not want them with him. He passed some shops and walked by the first small suburban gardens, with their sodden gravel paths and dripping gates. On the canal bridge a boy passed him pushing fuel in a pram. His feet were bare. The mud had splashed upwards in thick streaks to his knees. Peter kept his left hand under his coat. There was a blister on the ball of the thumb which ached now like a burn. Brother Quinlan did that. He probably didn't aim to hit the thumb as Mr. O'Rourke always did, but his sight was so bad he had a rotten shot. The boots had got looser than they were earlier. He realised this when he saw Clancy with three or four others passing on the other side of the road. When Clancy waved and called to him, he backed automatically until he felt the parapet against his back.

"Hey, Farrell," they called. Then one of them, his head forward, his behind stuck out, began to waddle with grotesque movements up the road. The rest yelled to call Peter's attention. They indicated the mime. Come back if you like, they shouted.

Peter waited until they had gone. Then he turned moodily down the bank of the canal. He walked with a stiff ungainly dignity, his mind not yet quite made up. Under the bridge the water was deep and narrow, and a raw wind which moaned in the high arch whipped coldly at his face. It might rain to-morrow and his shoes wouldn't be mended. If his mother thought the boots were all right God knows when his shoes would be mended. After a moment of indecision he took off the boots and dropped them, first one—and then the other, into the water.

There would be hell to pay when he came home without them. But there would be hell to pay anyway when Swaine's father sent around the note to say he had broken young Swaine's glasses. Like the time he broke the Cassidy's window. Half regretfully he stared at the silty water. He could see his father rising from the table to reach for the belt which hung behind the door. The outlook was frightening; but it was better to walk in your bare feet. It was better to walk without shoes and barefooted than to walk without dignity. He took off his stockings and stuffed them into his pocket. His heart sank as he felt the cold wet mud of the path on his bare feet.

PAUL BRAMBLE

"WE HAVE NO MORE TO ADD TO WHAT WE DO"

We have no more to add to what we do,
Say what you will.
Our hands act a part,
And chisel out and shape the stone,
Of edges hewn, irrevocable.

The visage grimaces, maybe smiles, who knows?
And we are left as hushed and awed
As any looker-on of speech or mime,
In the dark amphitheatre that surrounds
The spectacle of ourselves.

JAMES STEPHENS

THE WIND

The wind stood up and gave a shout.
He whistled in his fingers and

Kicked the withered leaves about
And thumped the branches with his hand

And said he'd kill and kill and kill.
And so he will and so he will.

JAMES JOYCE

IL VENTO

(nel parco di Stephen, Dublino)

Balza in piè Fra Vento e grida.
Tre dita in bocca, fischia la sfida.

Tira calci, pesta botte.
Ridda di foglie e frasche rotte.

Ammazzerò, ei urla, o gente!
E giuraddio costui non mente.

('The Wind' is reprinted from James Stephens' 'Collected Poems' with acknowledgements to the author and to Macmillan & Co., Ltd. James Joyce's translation has not previously been published).

TEMPLE LANE

THE DRAMATIC ARRIVAL OF M. J. MOLLOY

(This is the first of a series of articles on contemporary Irish dramatists by various critics.)

I am in no sense a dramatic critic. My literary training has been academic, a palimpsest upon the unpredictable gift of imagination. Ours is a sad age for Literature: the popularity and brilliance of her younger sister Science make her look like a poor relation. It is no part of my task to analyse what is or is not good "theatre". In spite of much impressive argument, I do not think the dramatist (or dramatists) Shakespeare was primarily concerned with that either. Shakespeare was obsessed with the drama in human actions, arising out of the conflict in human desires. Desire is two-fold—of the spirit and of the heart. Here, too, is the concern of M. J. Molloy. He is the author of three plays, produced at the Abbey Theatre, but only the last has attracted exceptional attention. The concern I have indicated is demonstrated in that play, which is in my opinion one of the notable achievements of our time: and both the action and the characters are illuminated by a philosophic sureness which rendered—for me at least—the whole irresistible trinity of that particular drama a brilliant surprise.

Surprise, and relief too: although I am well aware that the poet, or dramatist, should have within himself this particular kind of illumination. The prosaic arbiters of our critical approach have been deafeningly insistent upon the importance of realism so that the sensitive imagination is usually silenced or intimidated. (Of this I shall have more to say later.) On the long view, grave risks attend this practical approach: an imported commodity, if even this country was ever induced to accept one through high-pressure salesmanship!

Creative imagination may be driven underground. Happily for Irish intelligence and Irish writing, it can no more remain there than the sun can be chained under the horizon. This is one reason why *The King of Friday's Men* is important. We have been so starved of this illumination in practical, cynical times, that its reappearance gives the same sort of astonishment as dawn in drab winter—the sky wearing the colours of a transcendental summer rose.

The worst thing that can happen to drama is to fall exclusively into the hands of townsmen born and bred. (This is, by the way, also the worst thing that can befall any of the arts!) Your townsman never sees the round horizons, and his scale of values is so far removed from the primitive that he thinks himself a great fellow. But humility is a condition of creative receptiveness. It is not accidental that Teresa Deevy, and almost anyone who

has put new blood into our National Theatre since O'Casey, is country born.

The most serious rival of the drama is spectacle and this has always drawn the crowds—as Hollywood knows. What happens when a dramatist, after learning his craft through failure or half-success, says something which releases a whole spectacular sequence, not in actuality or in a crowd-scene, but *in the beholders' minds*? Something quite unique! That is the quality, and that the power, designated by the hackneyed and misused word *genius*. In the two first Molloy plays (a countryman's plays!) there was no evidence of any such thing. In *The King of Friday's Men*, either it is there, or something very like it. The place of spectacle is taken by limitless association in the mind, and the truths are valid for all time. This is not to make the play heavy and portentous; although I am told producers prefer *Old Road*, within its smaller framework, and without the glorious weight of *The King's* poetic prose.

M. J. Molloy's two first plays are work-sheets for his third. I wonder whether, if *The Visiting House* (1946) had been the first submitted by the author to the Abbey, this new dramatist would ever have felt his way and found it. *The Visiting House* puzzles me, having far more marks of a first play than *Old Road*. Its episodic character may be accounted for by the fact that the structure has been sacrificed to the subject. His latest work of all, *The Paddy Pedlar*, is a one-act play which awaits production and must therefore await comment also.

Let us, then, examine the work-sheets. *Old Road* (1943) has a pair of lovers, Myles and Brigid. They are victims of the social structure: each exemplifies the problem of the landless young person, each must work for the farmer or moneyed middle class. Brigid is a Connemara girl. Myles is in some respects a rough sketch for Bartley Dowd, but without the shillelagh. If the vogue was for sub-titles, this play could be called—*Old Road*, or *To Go or Not To Go*—whether or not, as one character says, to “hize off to England.”! Interwoven themes are the dread of emigration *versus* its economic necessity: the longing for escape into some personal security *versus* dread of the unknown. There is humour in the play, both of situation and of phrase. Also, the vocabulary of the west, raised to urgent beauty in *The King of Friday's Men*, is being tried out here. One recognises that melodious diminutive *a whileen*, and the cadences of the dialogue. Indeed Molloy's genius consists less in his immense memory for the telling folk-phrase than in his sure instinct for the right moment to use it.

Luke: They tell me he'd have got good matches before now.

Mrs. Callaghan: Twenty years ago. But then wan with a fortune wouldn't do for him but only wan with a salary; and 'tis that craze for a teacher has left him high and dry *in the world*.

This melodious rounding off of sentences, as they are in colloquial speech, supplies the sensitive ear with dialogue ready to be

the vehicle of poetry. In *The King* we shall constantly hear such choric cadences; and one understands why the Irish voice—most markedly in my own grandfather's Kerry—rises and falls on a definite lilt. These are subtleties to which no townsman's ear is attuned. And there is the recurrent word *evermore*, with the sound of the sea upon a long curve of strand.

The term *nice* in all three plays is used superlatively. Here it is in *Old Road*, Act II.

Paak: In England, if a girl is nice, they'll marry her without a penny fortune . . . wan that'd be nice and have a nice way with her. In England they have regard for a woman.

Myles: Well? And haven't they here?

Paak: (savagely). About here they have regard for nothing God ever sent except two things: land and money.

And Bartley says in *The King*—one of the prosaic passages—

"There was girls in Tyrawley so nice as they could coax a spud from a hungry pig . . . That's the most grieving thing in this world of God: to have great wish for a girl but no ways of marrying her, and to see her at the height of her bloom swept into marriage with another."

The verb "to suit" has also a special emphasis. "A cobbler is the one would suit me," Mrs. Callaghan tells Luke, who is one! And who can forget Bartley's speech to Una in *The King*?—conjecturing her father's wish for good stock. "I know my genealogy," he says, "and 'tis one would suit him."

Leaving these *minutiae*, we find in all three plays the same composing of plots and plans. Lordeen in *Old Road* takes refuge more than once in having a plan made. And in Act II, Lordeen, the churlish farmer for whom Myles works, owes the younger man six pounds in wages. "I have a plan that will lay every copper of it there in the middle of my fist before the week is out," Myles declares. "It never failed me yet to make a plan." It is the only way out of frustration, it is also a basic element of Arabic folk-tales as well as of these plays from our Connaught!

Another link between all three plays—less evident in the third and best—is the graphic use of nicknames. Lordeen is a peasant Caesar French, with his explosive temper but without the worst habits of that aristocrat! Verb-to-Be in *The Visiting House* has an appellation which exactly describes his survival from anglicized Sixth-Standard education. He pits his learning in vain against the specious inventions of the native conversationalist. Theirs is a Contest of the Bards in diminutive.

The comedy in *Old Road* is the raft upon which the serious preoccupation of the play is floated. Myles, reading the directions on a packet of jelly, is Everyman unskilled in the craft of home-making. The jelly did not set and was offered as a beverage. Myles has not followed the directions—why should he? "But sure if I only put in one pint, 'twould last no lengthen!"

The serious matter of the play is not alone the material fate of young people whom economic conditions have deprived of a

future at home. It is their interesting disregard for the sacredness of employers' property when wages are underpaid or withheld.

Mrs. Callaghan: Sure 'twas evermore the way with that class. When they get no pay they'd go behind your back for costs, whenever they'd need to buy thing."

The curtain comes down upon hope of escape. "Nowan," Mrs. Callaghan has already declared, "will ever rise their head in a narrow place." There has been great play upon this idea of restriction throughout. ("A shilling's size of a place. . . . asking her into a pocket handkerchief of a place . . . a placeen.") But the world is wide. The struggle between fear of the unknown and desire for wider mutual freedom is now resolved. It is the optimism of simple love, which we shall hear again when Bartley Dowd exclaims—"Una, girl, we're in God's pocket from now on." If that is too great a simplification for material life, it is at least a general truth. Myles says much the same thing.

. . . and Paak's bicycle lamp is working powerful. Wance we come up to Paak our troubles are over.

There, rightly, the curtain comes down. There are other incidental good things in *Old Road*: a comedy sketch of a melancholy Sergeant; a few memorable phrases which ought to be garnered up. Thus Luke, on the management of wives—

There's wan plan that never was known to fail. Come home drunk an odd time and pull down the house on them, and the worst of them will have respect for you.

The Visiting House is episodic: the episodes are good, as in the sham-haunting of Act III, when one character believes he is conversing with "a member of the next world." But the progress of the play is somewhat too like a series of *ceilidhes* with the unifying motive of light-hearted faction. The two groups are not shill-elagh fighters, but the supporters of rival visiting houses. In the perpetual composing of plans, one plan is the ghost. American critics have a method which is much in vogue: a psychological cypher is applied to the work of poet or dramatist, and the whole work de-coded according to the cypher. But M. J. Molloy has no such esoteric intentions, and neither have I. If *The Visiting House* is more than a gay comedy, it is folk-drama. It is the intermediate play—as if the dramatist were resting, preparatory to gathering his forces—between *Old Road* and the work which justifies the title of this article. We shall recognise an idiom made flexible, but verbal idiom is only one small component of all we shall find next.

The change and sureness of Molloy's "arrival" has been dramatic indeed. He by-passed the realism which hobbles inspiration at the present time by making his play historical but (in effect) timeless. It is never a costume-drama. The siege laid to women's

virtue by "tyranny hectors" (to quote Mrs. Callaghan again) is of concern so instinctive and so ancient that a dramatist who treats of it has an Irish audience automatically upon his side. One can imagine some other play touring the provinces for years—if the theme were all!—as dated as Dickens in some of his Victorian scenes. The passage in Dickens' work which immediately concerns us is in "A Tale of Two Cities." These things were a part of history and the feudal code, not only in Ireland but in France, in Hungary, in Russia.

No reader of Douglas Hyde's *Traditional Songs of Connaught* need be reminded concerning the identity of the King of Friday. For the sake of others, I will quote from Act III of the play. Bartley is addressing the dead poet's son, who bewails his failure to inherit "the gift." At the same time, the integral theme of the drama is stated.

Bartley (quietly): Rory, you have made the same mistake as me. 'Tisn't for good fortune God put our like into the world, but only to do odd jobs for Him. Yourself to give good minding to His composer that was blind, and myself to snatch a girl from the Pressgang, and to keep hunger from my sister-in-law and her orphans. We can no way complain. Himself gave His life for us of a Friday.

Gaisceen (as one confirming grave tidings.): It appears all right ye're picked among the King of Friday's Men . . . But if ye are itself, He'll reward ye highly when yere life's day is over.

This quiet, small piece of dialogue occurs towards the close of a violent, at moments a shocking, scene. (What shocks is not the killing, but the housekeeper's acceptance of the *status quo*). One would not expect the rejoinder to have come from Gaisceen! He is the likeable, slippery time-server, whose acceptance of the *status quo* in Act I, has a matter-of-fact realism which drew comment from at least one Irish newspaper after the first performance. But there it is.

So much for the title and philosophic theme. The action is so diversified that I derived personal entertainment from going around Dublin during the revival of the play in summer 1949, and asking Socratic questions—"Why does this play grip you? What do you consider justifies its title to greatness?"

I received a variety of answers, some vague, some discerning. A young girl, an experienced theatre-goer, could only define the play as "so real," and when pressed for her meaning, declared it was "lifelike." In other words, it depicted an aspect of truth: a variety of aspects indeed, as others whom I questioned hastened to tell me. (This, in what might have been costume-drama built upon the theme of seduction, was what impressed the ordinary mind.) My own comment is that truth and beauty are here, hand-in-hand with the awareness of vice and violence, with the added

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strength that the dramatist's simplicity is never *naïve*.

Another important comment described the play as "airborne." I knew what was meant. *Old Road*, and *The Visiting House*, interesting as they are, never leave the runway.

A wise man, who is also a good critic, said considerably more. He would have it that almost every recognised writer of our time has been stampeded into mistaking coarseness for strength. All natural human affection is laughed out of countenance as sentimental. A mother may not love her baby for that is sentimentalism, but she may murder her baby and that is literature. To this I would add my own reminder that the pure in heart are blessed. Yet a pagan Hottentot would not think so, if he judged by the intellectual literature thrust into his hands. Purity of heart is a shining quality, which has come to be rated as a defect.

Molloy's amazing achievement is to create, in the teeth of this fashionable, mistaken sophistication, a personality, the champion fighter, in which goodness never is, and cannot be, rated as a defect. The shillelagh-man has gentleness as the whole strength of his character: a character which *Dublin Opinion* declared in November 1948 "haunts our memory, and is so fine that we hope he will continue to haunt it." The same commentator commends the "wild picturesqueness" of the play. But the whole drama is built up upon a steel framework which never sags. That framework is conviction in the positive value of strong and gentle goodness even in a fighting world. I have heard Bartley Dowd described as the best single Irish dramatic creation of the last forty years. The adjective single is the key word. I am inclined to agree with the principle, although Juno is in close competition: and I hold that it was much easier to make Juno credible than Bartley credible. If the foregoing claim is too extravagant, at least he is one of the most memorable. If the fashionable and lost critics are away from the track of true continuity in literature and the drama, the legitimate line of creative writing is here. It is the sunshine as distinct from shadow, the day from night.

This Bartley, and the peasants who surround him, are encased in permanent importance by the amber of poetic daily speech. Molloy has been working on the Connaught talk in two other plays. Thus the texture of this third, prose though it is ostensibly, is poetry as distinct from verse. "Friends a whileen first: lovers a whileen more; then marriage at last." In the small love-scene on the hillside, an ordinary dialogue is elevated into lyricism by the simplest of monosyllables as the culmination of wonder. ("And I never felt your cheeks before . . . They're as smooth as new silk.") To appreciate the artistry of this scene, I imagine one would have to be oneself in love.

I will conclude by admitting that the play has faults. (But *Lear* is all-over-the-place!) The last Act is diffuse, and the suggestion of an alternative ending does not help very much by destruction of a reasoned philosophy. Yet through it all shines the glory and urgency of the dramatist's will, so that this is not just another play about the downtrodden dispossessed. These country

folk, no larger than life, seem yet to be larger. Poor old Gaisceen, veering here, dodging there, drinking with his landlord, making his plans, giving a dead man advice as to how to get into Heaven after all! Maura, the landlord's ex-mistress: keeping somehow her dignity, but anxious only (poor girl!) to have a match made up for her like anybody else, and to be decently settled in the world. These are usual enough, one would think; yet the cumulative effect is of greatness.

The mind is liberated, the imagination rears and escapes, and is off in full career like a high-spirited horse: away from pastures and walls, on to the firm golden sands of the shore, where the waves circle the earth. Round again, free again, the unpredictable ocean of imaginative thought which comprises all pity and terror.

THE GEORGE RUSSELL (Æ) MEMORIAL FUND

The above Fund was established with a view to fostering literature in Ireland as a Memorial to the late George Russell (Æ) in gratitude for the dedication of his great gifts to Ireland.

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DUBLIN.

FRANCIS SYLVESTER MAHONY—FATHER PROUT

"Poor Father Prout", wrote *The Athenaeum*, "has gone from a world which he helped to make merry and wise, in his quaint Irish fashion."

It was a superficial and inadequate judgement upon a serious, angry, disappointed man; but posterity was to handle him more superficially still. Today, his wit and vehemence forgotten, we remember him affectionately as the author of a single song, *The Bells of Shandon*. He would have raged, he would have pointed to a score of things he valued far more highly; yet I believe he is lucky in our choice. There is a lot to be said for being a one-song man. If people love the song well enough to keep it in mind, the odds are that they will love the name of its author. At all events, they will think of him singly and clearly. They will remember him for one thing alone. He will be associated for ever with a definite emotion, and there will be no blurring of his image in people's minds. If the emotion lies deep, if it is linked with love of home and country, with nostalgia for the past, then his place is secure. Rouget de l'Isle, with the *Marseillaise*, honoured wherever Frenchmen love their country: Robert Stephen Hawker, loved for asking in song "And shall Trelawny die?" by Cornishmen who never heard of the Vicar of Morwenstow: these are no trivial memories.

It may even be an advantage for the poet to be otherwise unknown. Whoever wrote the immortal verse that ends:—

"And we in dreams behold the Hebrides,"

is entwined for ever with the deepest feelings of his countrymen. Our admiration for the author of the *Bonny Earl o' Moray* is undisturbed by any biographical detail. We know nothing of him but the song. If we knew more, we might admire less.

Tom Moore or Stephen Foster, each remembered for a dozen songs, is in no better case, rather in worse. They touch our minds at several points. Listeners who thrill to *Let Erin Remember* may remember the fun Samuel Butler made of "the dear gazelle", and so feel doubtful about their liking for *I saw from the beach* . . . Besides, Moore is a famous figure in literary history. He does not speak for all Irish patriots, he can be disapproved of on social grounds, we can argue whether he did right or wrong in the matter of Byron's *Journal*. He is complex, his actions are open to dispute. We know too much about him.

Foster is happier, for almost all his songs express the same emotion, and in an idiom which allows us to be sentimental with-

out shame. They have gone all over the world. Errand boys whistle them in Moscow, Spaniards accompany exotic versions of them on the guitar, and I have found one convincingly disguised as a Danish folk-song. But his tragic personal history is well known too, and may invite a sorrow or a disapproval not inherent in the songs. Maybe, after all, the one-song men have the best of it.

Of these, Francis Sylvester Mahony is among the luckiest. His name is associated for ever with one of earth's pleasant places, and with a beautiful tune. Needless to say, more is known of him than the song; but he would be happier if the song were all. Its odd mixture of charm, pedantry, ingenuity, and sensitiveness expresses well enough the early Father Prout, but has nothing to say of the sarcastic controversialist or the recluse who ended his days in Paris. In that life, so gaily and purposefully begun, something went wrong: one of those deep disappointments which, apparently acknowledged and compensated on the surface, eat away the heart. Underneath, from the very beginning, Francis Mahony had a deep seriousness. Many an Irishman has failed to square his practice with his theory, but few take the failure as tragically as Mahony appears to have taken his.

The second son of Martin Mahony, a manufacturer of woollen goods, Francis was born in Cork in 1804. He claimed, in later life, to be a descendant of the O'Mahonies of Dromore Castle, another place associated for ever with a beautiful song. He was educated at Clongowes, went to France, and, with his brother Nicholas, became a student at a Jesuit College at Amiens.

His father wanted him to practise at the bar, but Francis had resolved to enter the Order. He was sent to Paris, where he spent two years of his novitiate, and then to Rome, where he was finally admitted. An abbé in Paris, a biassed witness, since he hated the Jesuits and all their works, wrote of Mahony in later years that he was typical in possessing "fanaticism, dissimulation, intrigue, and chicanery". What we know for certain is that his superiors were not at all sure of his fitness to be a Jesuit. The young man's scholastic qualifications were remarkable. He could talk Latin fluently, and compose with ease in prose and verse; but he was high-spirited and headstrong, and did not take kindly to the severe discipline of the Order.

Still, so brilliant a scholar and so serious a purpose were not to be withstood. All went well at Paris, and at Rome. It was not until Mahony returned to Ireland, and was made Prefect of Studies at Clongowes, that the trouble began.

It was a time of intense political consciousness in Ireland. The failure of the 1798 rebellion had thrown the people into a mood of sullen apathy, and now O'Connell, violent, eloquent, full of coarse vitality, was forcing his vision upon them, labouring at a movement which, with Moore as its absentee lyricist, was to inaugurate the new Ireland. Instead of forlornly lamenting the past, Irishmen began to see that they might dare to hope for a future.

Mahony took only a satirist's interest in politics, but he had

never approved of O'Connell, whom he disqualified as politician on the novel ground that he could not translate a chapter from any of the Gospels in the Greek Testament, and had not put together a Latin hexameter or pentameter in his life. Never careful to keep his opinions to himself, young Mahony soon spoke out of season.

One evening, after a day spent in coursing with his pupils, he was entertained to supper by the father of one of them, a man named Sheehan. At the table was a parish priest, one Father Callinan. Callinan spoke in praise of O'Connell, and drew upon himself a violent outburst.

Mahony beat the table with his fist.

"Fifty O'Connells," he thundered, "would not have got you Catholic Emancipation if the great bulk of the English nation had not made up their minds that the time was come, and Peel and Wellington had not been afraid of a civil war. The humblest boy in any of the lower schools at Clongowes," he added, "could run before O'Connell in classics. He never yet had a particle of sympathy with scholars and scholarship, and he never will."

He went on to say that O'Connell hated all Catholics, and to abuse the priest for supporting such a man.

The good Father Callinan did not appreciate either the criticisms or the manner in which they were uttered. He was avenged, for the Prefect of Studies wound up the evening by getting very drunk, and returning to the seminary in that condition with his pupils.

This escapade, not unnaturally, cost him his post. He went to Freiburg and thence to Florence, where he received the news of his dismissal from the Order. Instead of hardening his heart, he set himself to be admitted a priest. He attended lectures for two years, and at last, after many obstacles, achieved his ambition. Then, to his great delight, he was sent back to Cork, his native city, where he became chaplain to a hospital. An epidemic of cholera, during which he devotedly tended the sufferers, proved his courage, but he was of a temperament not easily kept in order, and a difference between him and his bishop caused him to leave Cork. He had wished to have a new church built, which he was to administer entirely by himself, and the bishop, realising the danger of so independent a mind in a position of authority, refused his leave.

Mahony now went to London, where his redoubtable fellow-townsmen, William Maginn, received him with open arms, and he at once became a figure of importance. He preached an occasional sermon, and officiated now and then at the chapel of the Spanish Ambassador: but his literary gifts, so long bottled up, bubbled to achievement, and he grew less and less a priest, and more and more a man of letters. Maginn, already celebrated as a journalist, was editor of *Fraser's Magazine*. It was to Maginn that John Murray had first entrusted the task of writing Byron's life, but, fortunately perhaps for Byron and certainly for Moore, he had given it up. He opened his columns to Mahony, and

Fraser's saw the birth of Father Prout.

There had been a real Father Prout near Cork, whom Mahony had known and admired in his boyhood: but Mahony's Prout soon added to the original, and became a substantial character with a life of his own. *The Reliques of Father Prout*, which appeared in *Fraser's* for two years, combined fiction, learning, and satire in a new way.

This work, which gave him a Bohemian life and full licence to attack any and everybody who displeased him, suited Mahony down to the ground. His wit, his scholarship, and his impudence all found scope. He translated *Hohenlinden* into Latin, and *The Groves of Blarney* into Latin, Greek, and French. One of his happiest efforts was to render some of Moore's poems into Latin and French, and claim that his versions were the originals.

"I must acknowledge," he confessed, "that in terseness, point, pathos, and elegance, Moore's translations of these French and Latin trifles are very near as good as the primary compositions themselves."

Father Prout had a fine time. He represented himself in conversation with Sir Walter Scott, he parodied Dionysius Lardner, he was offensive to Bulwer Lytton, he stoutly defended Harriet Martineau. All acknowledged his wit, but it was of the kind that made enemies. "There was," wrote Charles Kent,

... "but too often something scurrile in his acerbity . . . The personalities and nicknames with which he pelted the motley throng of those who in any way excited his antipathy, must have bred ill blood enough at the time of their first publication, and read even now most offensively when the passion of the hour has long subsided."

The *Reliques* went on till 1836. They soon appeared in two volumes, under the name of an imaginary editor, and illustrated by another Irishman, Daniel Maclise. When, a year later, Dickens started *Bentley's Miscellany*, Father Prout was on the first page of the first number with a poem entitled *The Bottle of St. Januarius*. He translated *The Burial of Sir John Moore* into French, again claiming his version as the original. He parodied Chatterton. Eighteen contributions from his pen appeared in succeeding numbers of the *Miscellany*. The literary clubs of London were as wide open to him as was Lady Blessington's, and he was a regular visitor to Harrison Ainsworth at Kensal Lodge.

The contributors to *Fraser's* met regularly to confer and drink, and in the celebrated drawing by Daniel Maclise we see, in a group of twenty-seven that includes Maginn, Thackeray, Coleridge, Southey, and Lockhart, Scott's biographer,

... "shrewdly peering . . . from under his eyebrows and over his spectacles, Frank Mahony."

Jerrold provides a detailed portrait of him at this time:—

"He was a remarkable figure in London. A short, spare man, stooping as he went, with the right arm clasped in the left hand behind him; a sharp face with piercing grey eyes that looked

vacantly upwards, a mocking lip, a close-shaven face, and an ecclesiastical garb of slovenly appearance—such was the old Fraserian, who would laugh outright at times, quite unconscious of bystanders, as he slouched towards Temple Bar, perhaps on his way to the tavern in Fleet Street where Johnson's chair stood in the chimney-corner."

The reference to Johnson was apt. John Sheehan describes Mahony, in a preface to one edition of the *Bentley Ballads*, as

"... a brilliant conversationalist and a most amusing, although not always to some of his hearers agreeable, companion. There was a strong Johnsonian element in him of consciousness, amounting sometimes to contemptuous superiority, which would sometimes break into downright rudeness of discussion. He had an ungovernable propensity to break flies upon the wheel, and to smash little people who were presumptuous enough to doubt, even with the utmost courtesy, the correctness of his opinions."

But a restless spirit drove Mahony on. He went abroad, travelled through Europe—Father Prout wrote *A Poetical Epistle to Boz* from Genoa—went to Asia Minor, and came back for a short while to London.

He had now settled down, in Charles Kent's description, as a "bookish scholarly flâneur, loitering through life by preference in continental cities; with quips and cranks galore for everyone he encountered; gladdened by the chance, whenever he was lucky enough to stumble across one, of foregathering with an old friend from whom he had long drifted apart, and from this time forward until the very end giving up his pen exclusively to the rough and ready labours of the journalist."

He was, as usual, busy in controversy. When Bentley fell out with Ainsworth, his editor, Mahony took Bentley's part, and attacked Ainsworth violently.

More travel followed, and, after a stay in Malta, Mahony went to Rome and served two years as the correspondent of the *Daily News*. Father Prout had become a Liberal. He cut a figure in Rome, and attended English Parties, an odd mixture of seminarist and man of letters. During these two years he saw a good deal of the Brownings, who were in Florence. He had met Robert earlier in London, and Elizabeth at Leghorn soon after her marriage. Mahony was so delighted to see Browning in Florence that he kissed him, to the poet's embarrassment. Both the Brownings liked him well, though Elizabeth found his habits rather trying: she always had to provide him with a spittoon. But the lonely Mahony outstayed his welcome, boring Robert and almost stifling the pair with his strong tobacco. As soon as he had gone, the Brownings would look at each other, sigh with relief, and fling the window wide open. It is a sad commentary on Father Prout's hunger for literary conversation that he, the entertainer and wit, should become a burden.

Elizabeth suffered even more than Robert, but the two were far too kind to let their guest see their feelings, or even to let their judgment be influenced. Elizabeth wrote,

"I believe him to be kind hearted and feeling—and his agreeableness when he pleases and his cleverness in every way, are quite undeniable."

Presently, however, Mahony's duties took him to Rome for longer periods, and the Brownings had relief. That Elizabeth was right in her estimate of his kind heart she realised when her poem *A Child's Grave in Florence* appeared. Mahony, taking it literally, wrote her a long and eloquent letter of consolation. At once touched and annoyed, she pointed out in reply that, if her child had died, she would hardly be able to sit down at once and write an elegy upon him.

One service, however, Mahony was able to do his friends. Browning could not sleep, and the doctors were unable to find a cause. Mahony, barging in one evening, cursed them for a pack of fools, beat up two eggs in a bottle of wine, and bullied Browning into drinking it. He did so, despite remonstrances, and at once fell into a sound sleep.

In 1848 Mahony went to Paris, where he spent the remainder of his days, becoming more and more of a recluse. In his lodgings, things were anyhow. As far as anyone looked after him, he looked after himself. His life was, as S. C. Hall put it,

"the very opposite to that of a gentleman. He was every day to be seen at Galignani's—seldom anywhere else, yet generally silent there—strolling in, greeting few or none, reading the paper, conversing not at all on topics of the day's news, and returning to his solitary chamber to read and write."

Jerrold supplies another picture. He saw Mahony

"... approaching along the Boulevards with his arms clasped behind him; his nose in the air; his hat worn as French caricaturists insist all Englishmen wear hat or cap; his quick, clear, deep-seeing eye, wandering sharply to the right or left; and sarcasm—not of the sourest kind—playing like jack-o'-lantern in the corners of his mouth."

He still wrote. Officially he was the Paris correspondent of *The Globe*, in which he owned a few shares, and contributed to it till his death. He wrote now and then for the *Athenaeum*, and an inaugural ode from him appeared in the first number of the *Cornhill Magazine*, which Murray launched in 1860.

Three years later, he sent a petition to Rome, asking that he might "resort thenceforth to lay communion." A priest, Monsignor Rogerson, had long been a close friend, and visited him every day during his last illness. Mahony had complained, in his infrequent witty letters to friends in England, that his "pipes" were none too good. They went back on him at last, and he died, in 1866, of diabetes and bronchitis. A collection was started at home in Cork in order to raise a memorial to him, but only eight pounds was contributed, and the proposal was abandoned.

For a general account of Mahony as a social being, we may turn to Hall. Speaking of his London days, he says:—

"Sometimes he would enter our drawing room, keep his hands in his pockets, look all about him, make some observation such

as 'You have changed your curtains since I was here last,' bid us good morning and retire—his visit occupying some three minutes. At other times he would sit and have 'a chat' about old times and forgotten peoples, then his remarks would be 'pithy' and to the point, the geniality of his nature would come out, and he was the pleasant, intelligent, and agreeable companion. But genial he was not: he was terse, sharp, and often bitter; and although his ecclesiastical training had rendered him cautious to a degree that amounted to suspicion, occasionally he would indulge in praise as well as censure, and seem to enjoy the one as much as he did the other."

Yes. Father Prout was lucky in his song, that old, attractive jingle, which so happily crystallises all that was best in his nature and pleasantest in his life. The picture it calls up is not of seminaries and disappointed hopes, nor of Kensington and controversy, nor of a lonely old man toasting a chop in a small, none too clean apartment of a foreign city; but of smiling waters, of sunshine, and a tune as graceful as the ripples and the distant sound of the bells. (It is the tune variously known as "The Groves of Blarney" and "The Young Man's Dream," which Moore used for *The Last Rose of Summer*, only the time is different from Moore's). And how biographical the song, how fully it covers his happier days. First, childhood:—

"With deep affection and recollection
I often think of those Shandon Bells,
Whose sound so wild would in the days of childhood
Fling round my cradle their magic spells."

Then travel abroad, and Rome and Paris:—

"I've heard bells tolling 'old Adrian's Mole' in
Their thunders rolling from the Vatican,
And cymbals glorious swinging uproarious
In the gorgeous turrets of Notre Dame."

But nothing could replace in his love

"The bells of Shandon that sound so grand on
The pleasant waters of the River Lee."

That is how he is remembered, and he could hardly have wished it otherwise.

BOOK REVIEWS

A GLASS OF PUNCH

A LONG DRINK OF COLD WATER. BY PATRICK CAMPBELL,
with drawings by Ronald Searle. (*The Falcon Press*, 7/6).

This drink is not really very long. About 160 pages are enough to contain 21 pieces originally composed by Mr. Campbell for the magazine *Lilliput*. Those who only occasionally see this timidly salacious and 'smart' magazine should not conclude that this book is necessarily a little thesaurus of the banal. It is a most diverting collection, brilliant and biting in parts and a great credit to Mr. Campbell, who proves that addiction to journalism, dread of drugs, need not necessarily atrophy a bright and genuine literary talent.

In guying frail humankind, Mr. Campbell valiantly places himself in the front row, finding, for instance, that his stammer stimulates adventure, including a notable encounter with two other stammerers in the National Library here. The best piece in the book is the author's account of his meeting with Lord Beaverbrook, who is apparently known to his serfs as "the Lord." It is a truly amusing piece of writing underneath which is glimpsed a portrait, brutal and devastating, of the contemporary British Press boss: this is the sort of humorous writing that is worth while, and very difficult to do properly. Another story with the same quality is that describing how the author, charged with a motoring offence, actually told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It was a British court but the censure on the farce of many legal processes is universal, nowhere more apposite than in Ireland. Some of the stories do not reach this standard and not a few show that Mr. Campbell has not yet quite realised that "the twenties" and all that—parties, gin-drinking, racing cars, one's first loves, and so on—are dead and gone and that nostalgic recollections can be boring, particularly to those who had their own taste of the era. Each succeeding post-war should entomb its predecessor.

The book is much enhanced by the drawings of Ronald Searle, who displays satanic penetration in matching his work with the mood and astringent tone of his author. The Beaverbrook portrait is diabolical.

Readers will be either amused or irritated by an "introduction" to the book by Mr. Leonard Russell, who writes loudly in praise of Mr. Campbell, no trace of a blush on either face. Mr. Campbell should have this effort quietly dumped if there is a future edition; he is in no need of references when applying for the job of entertainer, and in any case Mr. Russell's soggy benediction seems to rebound from the hard head of Mr. Campbell, with its content of cynical and brittle thought.

MYLES na gCOPALEEN

BELIEF AND POETRY

COLLECTED SHORTER POEMS, 1930-1944, BY W. H. AUDEN.
(*Faber and Faber*, 15/-).

THE EDGE OF BEING, BY STEPHEN SPENDER. (*Faber and Faber*, 7/6).

These poems raise at once the problem of belief and poetry. We are not immediately concerned with what the belief is, or implies, but we must hold that, whatever the belief, it must in poetry be dramatized, made coherent, made a delight not a mere utility. This would appear to be self-evident. It is necessary to mention it here for most of Mr. Spender's new poems fail because of his inability to unify his attitude while Mr. Auden has omitted from his collected edition some of the more obvious propaganda pieces.

They were both left-wing propagandists in the 'thirties and at the time wrote some good and some bad poems. The good poems were good—and this is the point—not because of, nor in spite of, their beliefs, but because in the poems those beliefs were given objective reality.

Already in 1936 Mr. Auden had left the rehearsed responses of Marxism and sought in Kierkegaard, Pascal and others for a more positive and wider faith. The years have also changed Mr. Spender. His socialism is revealed as having been but a thinly-veiled Anglo-Saxon Utopianism. Now that the deluded proletariat would appear to be on both sides of the Iron Curtain assurance is lost, "we know nothing."

And nothing have except we can
Comfort that poor condition, man.

We cannot doubt the sincerity of Mr. Spender's poems nor the pity for the human condition which abounds in them. That pity however too often remains mere comment, a banner-device. It fails to become that moving and intimate experience which is poetry because Mr. Spender fails to come to grips with it. It is allowed to remain a little outside experience, a curiosity, which is unable to justify itself, or to create symbols. There is a persistent O that is merely persistent and the metaphors trail off into untidy conceits.

There are, too, a thousand carelessnesses of words and phrasing and music, of lines that might have stopped but casually ran on. Sometimes as in "Ice" the casual line succeeds; more often it just folds up. There is so much real poetry smouldering on every page that one is moved to damn dictators and their shades. It is a mood Mr. Spender encourages but it also is ineffectual.

Mr. Auden's volume contains all of his poems with the exception of "New Year Letter," "For the Time Being," and "The Age of Anxiety." It is to be regarded as a definitive edition, and contains many poems not previously published in book form—although some of them have been included in anthologies. The

selection has been made by Mr. Auden and as such can hardly be criticised on its omissions.

Most of the poems belong to Mr. Auden's post-Marxist period. They are concerned mainly with:

This modern void where only Love has weight

and are written in varying styles. Mr. Auden has been influenced by so many poets that it is difficult to decide if he has a personal style. He has of course many eccentricities of style, so many in fact that he seems shy of attempting a personal style. He can be simple, elliptical, colloquial and other but seldom Auden. His images are rarely distinguished and he is reluctant to decide between them.

Mr. Auden has had a large influence on the verse written since the 'thirties and in this collected edition we may see one at least of the reasons. It lies in Mr. Auden's peculiar facility which enables him to function as a testing ground for every stray fashion and influence. This is perhaps but a reflection of his immaturity. He refuses to deal fully with the implications of his beliefs. He refuses to suffer a poem. This is the source of his continued failure to write poetry worthy of his very obvious talents, and is of course but another aspect of the problem of poetry and belief.

P. J. MADDEN.

I AM ALONE, BY WALTER MACKEN. (*Macmillan*, 9/6).

Walter Macken's second novel lacks the urgency and fire which made his first, *Quench the Moon*, a work of unusual promise. Admittedly, the characters come alive instantly—Patrick Moore, the young emigrant in a strange land, coming through different jobs, through various adventures, through marriage and fatherhood, to a realisation of his own place in the scheme of things, to the knowledge that "no man is an island, entire of itself"; Jack, the religious maniac, and Seamus, the cheerful Galwayman; Maureen, whom Pat marries, and Leila, the good-time girl, who temporarily breaks his heart. But the first half of the book has a slightly forced air, a too familiar pattern; to my mind, also, it is reminiscent of Maclaren-Ross's novel of the same immediate pre-war period, *Of Love and Hunger*, itself derived from Auden and Hemingway. I think the author attempted to crowd too much detail into this section, to make Patrick Moore a modern Irish Everyman; the result is to deprive the character of most of its individuality and interest.

There are scenes here and there which stick in the memory—the fight in the dance-hall, the bank-holiday picnic, Mrs. Gosper and her aggressive Alsatian ("he always looked at Pat as if he was three-quarters of a pound of raw beef which he would love to gulp"); and when Pat becomes entangled with the revolutionary activities during the start of the war, there are hints of greatness. The character of Jojo, the idealist, the man on the run, has considerable distinction and emerges as the most important character

in the book ("I am alone, Pat. And that's the best way to be. For me. A man is his own best company. At least you can't betray yourself"). There is more than a suggestion here that Walter Macken's best work is still to come. *I Am Alone* is no masterpiece, but it is a novel to remember for its potentialities, if not for its achievements.

MAURICE KENNEDY.

HENRY BLY AND OTHER PLAYS, BY ANNE RIDLER. (*Faber*, 10/6).

Verse drama should be the greatest of the arts, for at its best it includes all. Fine poetry—fine music (strictly incidental!—and yet, an odd casual song may flower, impromptu)—incidental dancing—and sets designed, painted, and imbued with suitable lighting, by a fine artist. What better, within time's boundaries, could the spirit of man desire?

Critics who complain that Christopher Fry does not move them cannot indeed care about poetry. Music that makes the blood sing—that terrible directness of the imagination that recreating the world, drives in its image to our very depth—does it not touch the heart? Are our hearts not wounded often enough by life? No, I do not quarrel with Mrs. Ridler for not stirring our hearts. But we all have a soul, and in art deep must call unto deep—which does not at all mean that the theme needs to be special.

Henry Bly and Other Plays lack the integrity of the imagination. Reading them I begin to wonder whether there is anything real outside the imagination. We know that nothing has been discovered in higher mathematics and little in science without that impossible leap into the darkness—that guess of the imagination. Poetry is art, not literature. We have learned to sneer at the Victorian idea that 'every picture tells a story.' Many critics have still to realise that it is not good for a poet to be over-concerned with his plot or story. Imagination is never shallow: it may, like a bird, sip a moment, on the wing, from the waters of infinity—and the movement, the gesture, will have profound significance. I do not stop to think are the plots of these plays trivial.

There are some good phrases in the book, such as:

For many dream their day in cells
And think the outer world their shadow
Thrown on the cell wall—most, indeed,
Unless the lightning of love or grief
Shows up the window, opening on the world.

I find two phrases in *The Mask* obscure, but there is no sense of mystery, nor the experience of what Parain calls 'the giddy sensation of the inexactitude of speech'.

The word 'atmosphere' has been abused. Yet it covers perhaps much of what I have said. For instance, from start to finish, it is atmosphere that makes *Family Reunion* so enthralling a play.

I feel sullen reading this book. It was made in the parlour.

And, entering, I am not allowed to take my imagination in with me. I rush off, murmuring:

"How to keep

Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty . . . from vanishing away?"

BLANAID SALKELD.

PHASES OF ENGLISH POETRY. BY HERBERT READ. (*Faber and Faber*). 10s. 6d.)

Books about poetry I suspect. Aesthetic theory is one of the highest forms of human entertainment, but once it passes beyond talk print may confer on it importance, whereas it has, in fact, about as much conclusive relevance to any work of art as a yo-yo to Pareto.

One virtue of Herbert Read's book is that he is content to trace past developments without forcing out of them any kind of manifesto for future practice. I doubt if a hundred-and-fifty pages have ever been made to hold a more concise or lucid chronicle of English poetry.

The least detached and most illuminating sections are on "Poetry and Sentiment" and "Pure Poetry." There are some ~~pithy~~ remarks, worthy of more creative setting—like this: 'Sensibility unaccompanied by thought is sentimentality'—or the stirring phrase: 'the wonder and the doom of love.'

Since the book first appeared in a Lecture Series, how can we carp at the somewhat professional tone? Tho' it's a pity that one of the new chapters, "Poetry and Love," should contain language like 'and so we come to.' And, since the aim is admittedly 'initiative rather than critical,' how to resent the occasional over-stressing of historical as against intrinsic value? Tho' it occurred to me that it may not be such a brainy idea to tell the ordinary reader so exactly why Collins's "Ode to Evening" is unique in the 18th century: unaware of that isolation his approach would be freer, purer, more spontaneous. After all, it doesn't ultimately matter a fourpenny-bit whether Whitman or Diodorus Siculus is the daddy of modern American poetry. What matters is whether a particular reader finds a particular poem good or bad.

PEARSE HUTCHINSON.

THIS IS IRELAND, LEINSTER AND THE CITY OF DUBLIN. BY RICHARD HAYWARD, (*Arthur Barker*, 15/-).

It is an excellent thing that Ireland should benefit from the Englishman's rising passion for topography. It is also of the first importance that Irish topographical books should be produced by writers, native or foreign, who not only know the relevant facts (which the foreigners generally do not know) and can present them with a certain urbanity (which the natives usually lack), but who also have a disciplined and unconfusing sense of values where the beauties of architecture and landscape are in question. Mr. Hayward, Ulster born and bred, seems to satisfy these requirements admirably; and further, as an added grace, his narrative of events

and opinions is conveyed in a most engaging lucid prose.

His book is indeed more than an up to date guide-book to the salient points of interest in the twelve Leinster counties; it is also a personal and readable account of his own wanderings through the length and breadth of the Province. And this is fortunate. For as a conventional guide, the book has two very serious defects. The first and worst is the absence of any sort of index. The second is the absence of any adequate map. There are in fact two maps, but one is pictorial and of no real value, and the other is a geological map of the whole country on far too small a scale. This last is particularly regrettable because one of the most original and welcome features of Mr. Hayward's book is its geological interpretation of landscape—an approach which adds as much interest to the consideration of a natural prospect as does a knowledge of its history when considering an ancient building.

However, apart from this complaint, for which Mr. Hayward was probably not responsible, the reader and traveller should have nothing but gratitude for an intelligent, enthusiastic, and by no means uncritical appreciation of an area which is a palimpsest of history and pre-history and a gallery of varied views, from the Wicklow massif where "rises a baker's dozen of mountain peaks more than two thousand feet high," to the "withdrawn quiet beauty of the Irish midlands"; an area rightly described as "in every sense the richest Province of Ireland."

A word must be added in commendation of Mr. Raymond Piper's uncommonly sensitive and delicate illustrations which provide, for once, a satisfying alternative to the usual photographs.

GEOFFREY TAYLOR.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

NORAH HOULT: Born Dublin. Now lives in London, but has also lived in Ireland and America. Is a well-known short-story writer and novelist.

JAMES PLUNKETT: Born Dublin, 1920. Is secretary of Workers' Union of Ireland. Has contributed to various magazines in Ireland and Britain.

MICHAEL LUCEY: Born Scilly, near Kinsale, 1926. His first stories were published in *Irish Writing* and occasioned wide interest. Since then he has contributed to *Life and Letters Today*. Is in the R.A.S.C.

CONSTANCE MADDEN: Born Limerick. Is married, has two sons and lives in Cork. Previously contributed to *Irish Writing* No 5.

L. A. G. STRONG: Born Plymouth, 1896, of predominantly Irish parentage and spent a great deal of his youth in Ireland. Is widely-known as a writer and broadcaster.

ROBERT O'DONOGHUE: Born Cork, 1925. Has had articles and short stories published and his first published poem appeared in *Irish Writing* No. 6.

PAUL BRAMBLE: Is the pen-name of a young Cork painter who has exhibited at the Oireachtas and at exhibitions of the Munster Fine Arts Club. Was educated at Clongowes Wood College and Presentation College, Cork.

TEMPLE LANE: Family has been in Ireland for three hundred years. Has lectured and published two volumes of verse as well as some novels.

SHEILA PIM: Born Dublin, 1909. Educated at French School, Bray; Lausanne; Cambridge. Publications include *The Flowering Shamrock* and detective stories placed in Ireland. Also contributes to gardening magazines. Interests, painting and metaphysics.

WILLIAM WALSH: Born Kildare, 1912. Practised as a solicitor in Dublin and then took over the management of a farming Company in Meath. Is married to Mary Lavin.

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